Calliope

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Volume XII - Spring 2015

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Calliope, c/o The Division of Languages and Literature
Northern Virginia Community College
8333 Little River Turnpike
Annandale, VA 22003-3796

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Our thank you also goes to the many students who submitted their creative efforts for consideration. It is only through their courage and diligence that *Calliope* continues to materialize. We received many fine works this year but were limited in the number of entries we could publish. We hope, however, that students will persist in submitting their works to future editions of *Calliope.*

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Submissions are welcomed from September through February each year at **Calliope@nvcc.edu.** Submission guidelines are available at **http://www.nvcc.edu/calliope.** *Calliope* reserves the right to reprint and present submitted works on the Calliope website and other media. Students interested in joining the *Calliope* staff as interns should contact the editors at the address above.

calliope *kal<e>i:opi. U.S. (Gr. Kallioph)*

(beautiful-voiced), the ninth of the Muses,
presiding over eloquence and heroic poetry.

1. An instrument consisting of a series of
steam-whistles toned to produce musical notes,
played by a keyboard like that of an organ;

2. attrib. calliope hummingbird,
a hummingbird, sellula ***calliope***, of the
Western United States and Mexico.
Oxford English Dictionary

Calliope First Prize 2015 - Poetry

Muzhda Sabira Ghafoori

Afternoon Tea

Perhaps one day my heart will soften

And I will feel nothing but the steady thrum
of my daughter's stubby fingers
against my skin
Auburn ringlets kissing cheeks
Morning sun—
Lingering against our still bones
Around us only peace

Perhaps time will fade my memory

Forget the nights I did not know
whether to move or keep still.

Forget the Sunday my aunt sat for afternoon tea
And raged against the tyranny of a husband
And cried angry tears
Borne of an age old pain
That HE should lay his hands on her

Days after my broken father
left us
For the third time
And my wounds still bleeding
Rubbed raw and fresh as I watched

My sister
Weeping over his letter
Becoming a woman before ever
Being a child

My aunt
Railing at my mother
Asked
Don't you remember you used to
Dress to the nines just to sweep the floor?
Your laughter carried through the house
What happened to you?
You are broken
Where did you go?
You are lost
Who hurt you?

Five women
Sitting around the table
For afternoon tea

Eight months after my uncle left us
So suddenly
Recounting the day like a broken record
All of us mourning
All of us shaking leaves and wisps of blue
All of us howling as if it had happened yesterday

Keeping time with our hands
My mother's scarred and callused feet
Scraping against the tiled floor
Sniffing through her tears

The mailman
Underneath the window
Systematically dropping our bills into boxes
That horrid little dog
Barking in the distance

The wind picking up and running through the Virginia oaks
The sun dazzling sharp against brick and concrete

Each of us
Nursing such aching pain
Perhaps I will forget it

Perhaps I will forget.

Calliope First Prize 2015 - Artwork

Susan Reichbart

Oakland Theater Nightscape

Oil Painting

Calliope Second Prize 2015 - Poetry

Sydney Kim

Foreign Languages

But mama,
you haven't seen how soft his hands are
at 2am when they hold me as I cry.
And I know the Chinese lettering tattoo
on his left forearm looks juvenile to you,
but they show me he appreciates
foreign languages and I think he's
slowly learning how to be fluent in my
nervous blinks and spoken rifts.

And papa,
I know he's not good with politics
but he's got good hands that hold doors
open and fix all my broken parts right.
He doesn't make much money, but papa,
I swear he's the only home
I've ever known.

Calliope Second Prize 2015 - Artwork

Danah Kim

Wisdom of Human

Sculpture

Calliope First Prize 2015 - Creative Nonfiction

McLean Pearson

The Pianist and His Love

The Turkish March is the perfect girl.

It was love at first sight. She was intriguing and inviting. Assertively loud yet also a soft, sweet side to accompany that. Entertaining, unique, romantic, sharp, grand, demure… classic-- everything at once. Lofty ideas wrapped up in an impossibly petite bundle of perfection. Life itself reverberated from every song-like syllable uttered by her. And, just like me, she loved piano.

I had to have her.

This crush began at sophomore year's end, back in the days of high school. My piano instructor warned that the Turkish March was a challenging piece, a higher level than I was playing. I tuned this out; it didn't matter to me.

She was just too charming.

I might have been in love.

At first, it was exciting to practice. I was learning my all-time favorite piece. The song added a new dynamic to the flat days, with a wonderful finale to look forward to. But my infatuation and idealism blinded me from the truth:

I simply was not good enough.

Initially, I thought my struggles were simply a minor setback.

However, there were mistake after mistake, each chipping away at my oblivious sanctuary of contentment. Finally, the wall fell. Frustration flooded in. I just could not move my fingers fast enough and my timing was consistently off. Instead of tickling with her marvelous melody to lure out that lovely laugh, I was driving her to tears with my cruel and clumsy fingers. I was getting nowhere. My teacher kept urging me to try a simpler piece, and although the lack of faith stung, its source seemed credible enough. I wanted badly to give in to these requests and quit. Maybe it was not meant to be.

How foolish to think that she was the one.

The harshest critics lie within; and I knew my underwhelming show deserved no spotlight.

My high expectations turned out superficial as I lacked the skill and now passion that were much needed to realize my dream. The terrifying thoughts of whether or not I could ever master such a challenge haunted me; what if I never could, in regards to this hurdle or any other down the scale of life?

I developed an irritable and bleak outlook.

I was starting to loathe the song for what it had turned me into; my disposition had become just as horrible as the song on the piano… when I played it. I guess what you put into an endeavor is what you get out.

My crush was now playing a major, key part in my life; but not in the way I was hoping.

Yet, no matter how elusive she was, the flirting continued. It was incessant. But it was ever alluring; the prospect of having such happiness permanently in my life was overpowering my doubt. Unwillingly, I had let her become the maestro to my mind, the conductor of my thoughts. Only she could make my heart truly trill with excitement… or drone in despair.

At the time it seemed more so the latter, but anything that could propel me to such heights deserved an encore. A second, better attempt in taming my passionate longing. The possibilities were too splendid to pass up.

If I had quit then, it would not stop the suffering, rather eliminate any chance of bettering my dismal situation.

The more I thought about it, the more I was sure: I didn't want her presence in my life to be merely a failed staccato.

I wanted us to be eternal.

It was a seemingly unfortunate obsession for me… but one thing had become clear:
I could not ruin this chance with such an awe inspiring piece of art.

I had to have her.

Although she was many octaves above my bass-like level, I was to double my determination to reach her. This song was definitely worth it and much more.

Unconsciously, she changed my character once again, making me strive to better myself. My heart was compelling me to an effort infinite. No matter the difficulty, I was fixated on attaining perfect harmony; for song and soul alike. Dull practicing became a necessity; perfect practice makes perfect performance. And from these efforts, I slowly began to let my love's tunes capture their true delight, much to her own. The best relationships are the ones in which you make each other great, no?

I became fascinated by every intricacy of the song and how each one was essential to its greatness: the grace notes were graceful, the drastic changes in amplitude and tempo throughout were exciting, the slurs created an elegant atmosphere to complement its exhilaration, the loveliness of the light-hearted theme. All these features combined into a whole that was greater than the sum of its parts.

No notes were wasted; the piece was flawless.
I wanted the whole world to know of these splendors, and to boast of how she was only mine. No one could see her or display her with the exact affection as mine, or so I would like to think. Though she may have been made in the heavens with all her goodness, she was created for me.

Selfish thinking? Maybe. But she had made me feel powerful and worthy again, and then I knew:

I was in love.
Looking back, I learned three things from my crush. First, love can be your very own hymn… or requiem. It is not all rosy as most believe. It takes time and the process

can be just as depressing as elating. However, with the right amount of sacrifice and dedication, it shall chime true, for anything is possible in its name. Second, listening to a beautiful song is nice, but perfecting it on an instrument reveals a whole other, marvelous side; face value isn't nearly as profound as the vast beauty within. Lastly, keep chasing after your true love, never settle; who knows what might happen? Your fantasies may end on a happy note.

Calliope Third Prize 2015 - Artwork

Lema Mansoury

Company

Photography

Calliope Third Prize 2015 - Poetry

Christian V. Doud

Naples to Bridgetown

Edward Beddows (1792-1845)

There is no fair plot
as I lie chapped and chafed,
        under watchful eyes
without empathy or imbalance.

        The singe of cubic yards
of heavy brine and brack splits
        and bathes what remains
of this lonely last.

        Splintered and hove to,
lingering mists take sights on fleeing
        bodies. What horror must
have snatched our dogwatch seamen!

        O! Mates! Left to drift and descend,
these hands made tender loin and leaf!
        Bristol and Norwich and Mann,
and salt beef broiled in cane juice.

        Saltcod and tack, dressed for Westminster,
drowned in Boston rhum and ale.
        The revelry of Tarrafal hidden by hocks and
quarter-roasts and the putrid bilge effluere.

        The star rises for the Admiral of the Galley!
Darters and auks and what lurks below! Behold, the last
        ladle and tin sinks, silver dartfish and crescents
of blue and proud boys with aching bellies.

(1834)

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Calliope First Prize 2015 - ESL

Souran Sateri

The Apostle

Twenty years ago in my hometown Tehran, the capital of Iran, my family and I met a special man. It was a hot summer day at the beginning of Ramadan the ninth month of the Muslims' year. During this month, strict fasting from sunrise to sunset is observed and Muslims cannot eat or drink anything. My father was looking for someone to fix our garage floor and he hired a laborer who had worked on our neighbor's house. His name was Mr. Rassoul, whose name mean "apostle".

He finished his job early close to sunset, so my mother asked him to stay for dinner. First, he refused, but he was convinced after my parent's insistence. He was a religious man so he had been fasting the entire month. He looked extremely miserable and we were really happy that, at least, we could feed him. He refused to sit at the same table with us as his clothes were filthy, but my father insisted and told him that it was our pleasure to have lunch with him at the same table. He was from a very poor village in the west of Iran. He was the breadwinner of his family: four children, his wife and also an elderly blind woman who lived in his neighborhood.

His rough hands, the deep wrinkles of his face, and his sunburned skin affirmed his tough life. He had been working since he was eight years old when his father passed away. Like other rural people, he got married and had his first child when he was a young teenager. He had been working his entire life to provide for his family. It was surprising that regardless of all his misery, he had always been thankful. We were shocked with how this unfortunate worker was surviving in an expensive city while supporting two other families. During the rest of Ramadan, my mother often sent him and his co-workers a tray of food, fruit, and pastries. We didn't know him well but he enchanted us with his modesty, politeness, and his sweet rural dialect.

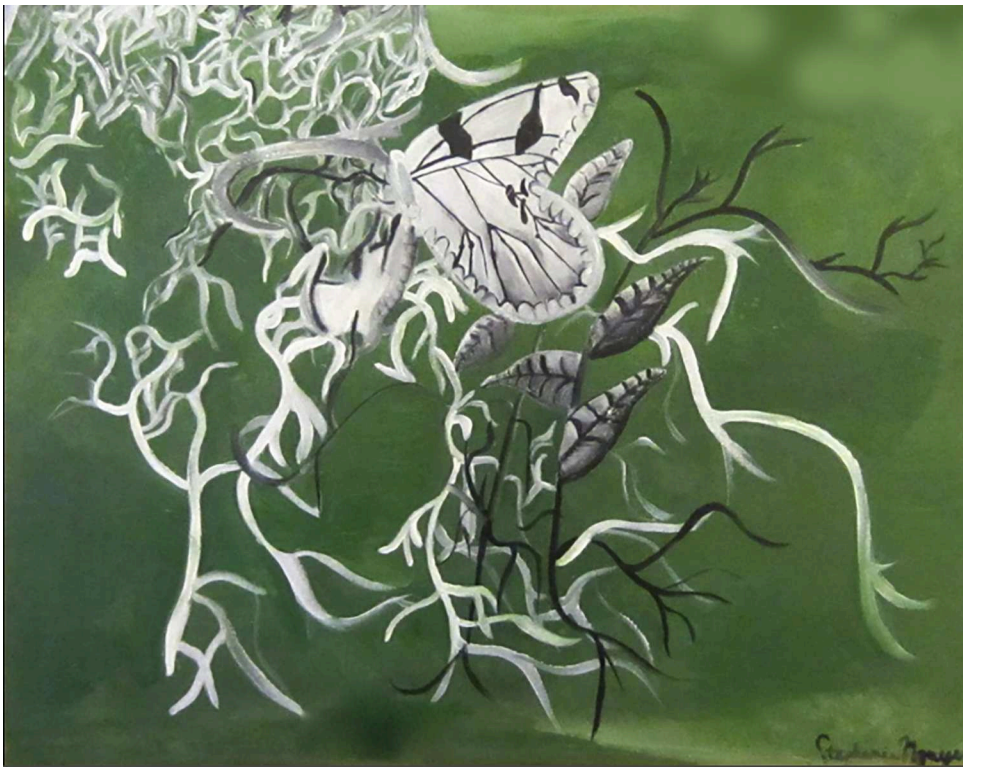
A month later, he brought us a full basket of souvenirs from his village to thank our family. Even after twenty years, I still cannot forget the pleasant taste of honey, sesame pudding, traditional sweets, breads, ghee and pomelo's peel jam he brought us as souvenirs. They were all the best I've ever eaten! We were sure that he paid his whole month's salary for them. My mother and I couldn't stop our tears as we were impressed with his generosity.

A few months later, my father went to the shopping center near our house to do our daily shopping. Unfortunately he heard the shocking news that early in the morning a laborer had been killed in a terrible hit and run accident while crossing the street on his way to the mosque. My father unconsciously went headlong to the workshop where Mr. Rassoul was working. Sadly, the deceased person was our lovely rural friend. We were mournful as if we had lost one of our close relatives. My parents tried to find his family's address, but

all their efforts were in vain as the only person who knew him returned to his village for good. We still don't know what happened to his family and his blind neighbor. Who knows? Maybe history repeated itself and his son took on his father's responsibilities.

Stephanie Thu Nguyen

Morphing Butterfly



Painting

Calliope Honorable Mention 2015 - Poetry

Muzhda Sabira Ghafoori

Softly

As the morning lingers on your cheeks

Tiny particles—

Rise and stir as if from sleep,

As your skin begins to tingle—

Hum—

Greeting the early light.

As dawn and fog dance together—

Hanging molasses around your bones—

Think of me.

Calliope First Prize 2015 - Fiction

Jinbum K. Dupont

Transit Man

The dull drone of rain drummed all around. The sky was an overcast gray and the air was clouded with mist as the buses and cabs flowed along the JFK terminal road. It was next to the green trash bin where Stewart would park his cab and stare longingly at the glass doors, waiting for a chance to see his second ex-wife Jennifer. Some days he saw her, some days he didn't. The windshield wipers pulsed rhythmically, conducting the rain like a metronome and lulling Stewart into a reflective daydream. Oftentimes Stewart reflected about his life choices, his regrets, what has been, what could have been… Suddenly the drumming crescendoed as someone got into the back seat.

"Lenox Hill Hospital please," a soft, chillingly recognizable voice spoke.

"Yes ma'am," Stewart replied, promptly shifting gears and accelerating away. Stewart glanced into the mirror, and saw her stroking the rain out of her smooth blond hair as she fiddled with her phone. A wave of nausea overcame him as he couldn't believe his eyes, she was his first wife Martha. Stewart's mind instantly flashbacked to their high school prom, their college intimacy, their quaint church wedding, and their very successful laundry business. But then he was reminded of when he took the entire business and left Martha so he could marry Jennifer, the daughter of a multi-billion dollar company CEO. Stewart shuddered at the thought.

"Hey, the rain is lightening up." Martha suddenly spoke up. Stewart froze, was she talking to him? He didn't say anything.

"I'm on my way to see my dad at the hospital…Yeah." Stewart glanced again into the mirror but only saw half her face. Her head was tilted like it was squeezing the phone against her left shoulder.

"I've been meaning to talk to you, but…I never really got the chance." I guess she doesn't recognize me? Stewart thought to himself. He couldn't decide if that was a good or bad thing.

"Oh, well, the kids have moved out already. Jill is at Stanford and Jack joined the Peace Corps…Mm." Wow, she has children? Good for her. Stewart nodded, he had always wanted a family, but the circumstances weren't always…right…

"Yeah, I know, they grow up so fast…" She must be talking to a friend? Maybe it was her friend Sally, the girl with the mole on her chin. Stewart reasoned.

"Dom officially moved out last week, of course I kept the house." Women always got to keep everything. Stewart smirked, his last divorce didn't end well for him.

"So how have you been?" Stewart stared sullenly out into the hazy road, Lenox Hill Hospital ½ mile, a sign read. The rain had slowed to a drizzle so Stewart ticked off the wipers.

"Well it sounds like you've been busy." There was a hint of sarcasm in her voice this time. Stewart slowed down and pulled up against the curb of the hospital.

"Uhm, that'll be 35 dollars and 25 cents." Stewart called back. There was a pause.

"What's wrong with you?!" Martha suddenly shrieked.

"Huh?" Stewart yelped.

"I've been talking to you! Telling you how I've been doing! And you don't say a goddamn word!" Martha shouted. Stewart was shocked.

"After everything that has happened, y-you can't even say hello?" Martha was choking up a bit. "Here, take your money, this was a mistake." Martha tossed the crumpled bills to the front and hastily climbed out of the cab.

"W-Wait!" Stewart managed to squeak out. "I'm sorry! Wait, listen to me! Come back!"

Martha stopped, the light rain gave an aura around her. A bus roared past as Martha turned back reluctantly and stopped beside the driver's window with her arms crossed.

Stewart confessed, "I'm-m sorry, I was afraid you didn't remember me! I thought you were talking to someone else on your phone…and I didn't think you would want to remember me…or talk to me after everything I've done to you…"

Martha stared down at Stewart for a moment before sighing, "The past is in the past. Right now I see you've been struggling because you're still the same miserable jerk… that I fell in love with long ago…" Martha sounded more reminiscent now, and Stewart could see the wrinkles beside her beautiful blue eyes. He never realized how long it has been since he's seen her.

"Here, have this." Martha reached out and handed him her business card reading "Martha's Laundry Services," along with her phone number and other contact information.

"We can have dinner some time. Maybe. Give me a call." Martha said as she walked briskly away into the hospital.

Stewart stared at the name card and his eyes began to well up. Rain trickled down the windshield as the bustle of the city moved around him. How could he ever apologize enough? Stewart wiped his eyes. He didn't know whether to call her or not.

After silently brooding for a while with his head pressed against the steering wheel, Stewart perked up as someone opened the rear door and slid in.

"JFK Airport." A husky voice asked from the back seat. Stewart shifted gears and accelerated back onto the road.

The air was a little clearer with only a light drizzle of rain. Stewart kept thinking whether or not to call Martha. After arriving at the airport, Stewart unconsciously looked to his spot beside the green trash bin, but it was occupied. He found an open space farther up. He sat there waiting, still going over the decision in his head. The rain had stopped and thin streaks of sunlight began to filter through the dissipating clouds. Suddenly, something caught his eye up ahead. A young woman with a green coat was walking briskly out of the terminal doors. It was Jennifer. Stewart stared at her for a moment, then past her and towards the horizon where a plane was ascending into the clouds. Instead of driving over to pick her up, he promptly picked up the name card, his phone, and dialed the number…

Michaela Rossi

The Humble Crow

Above all birds is the humble Crow
In a soaring flock that fills the sky;
It does what it can to stay around,
And by simple means to multiply.

The powerful Hawk with eyes of gold,
Bedecked in stripes of brown and cream
Catches fresh meat in forests quiet,
And in small numbers, is little seen.

The round-eyed Owl of feathers soft,
Which makes no sound in stealthy flight,
Stares with a wide and thoughtful face,
Yet travels only by shade of night.

A speedy diver is the Falcon sleek,
A powerful hunter which every bird fears;
Its laser vision lets it soar so high,
A tiny figure to us appears.

While the Crow, in obvious, striking black
Over half the world will make its home
Feeding on anything it can find
So hundreds around us can plainly roam.

Danah Kim

In-Yeon

Multimedia

Addison O'Donoguhe

Goodnight Princess

I woke up to the sound of raindrops hitting my window. The dark clouds outside blocked the rays of sunlight which tried so eagerly to light the earth. For the first time in my life, the colors red, white and blue were not comforting, camouflage did not make me feel safe, and the men in uniform were the bad guys. My room was dark, and the house was silent; a kind of silent that would bring anxiety and a sense of uneasiness to anyone who experienced it. I took a moment to gather myself, swept the fragile brown hairs away from my eyes, and started for my bedroom door. Reluctantly dragging myself across the carpeted hallway into the poorly lit bathroom, I brushed my teeth, soaked my puffy eyes in warm water and made my way down the cold wooden steps which led to the family dining room.

Upon entering the room, I came face-to-face with my father's uniform jacket. All my life, he came home every night from work and hung this very jacket inside a small closet to the right of our cherry colored front door. He would untie his boots and stack them next to my pink sparkly sneakers on the floor, but today this normality would become merely a memory. My father would not come home for dinner tonight. I would not watch him hang his jacket in the closet or untie his faded boots. His scruffy cheeks would not rub against mine as he whispers "goodnight princess" into my ear moments before I would fall asleep. My father was my hero. He named me, drove me to school almost every day for years, and always made it his goal to make it home in time to tuck me in under my pink camouflage sheets and give me a goodnight kiss.

The house didn't seem as lively that day. The morning cartoons were not at full volume and my mother had not made Mickey Mouse shaped pancakes. I don't know how long I was standing there under a trance, but it felt like hours. The memories flooded my mind one after the other as my eyes were locked upon the jacket hanging on the back of the worn out dining room table chair. Distant soft whispers ticked my ears and rudely forced me to live in the present moment. I could hear gentle "I love you's" coming from the kitchen, so tender and genuine in meaning. I hid myself behind the wall that separated myself from my parents, and allowed only one of my eyes to peak into the kitchen. As a child I could not yet understand the feelings that came with being in love. I did not understand the meaning behind the touch of my father's hand to my mother's arm, or the glimmer in my mother's eyes while she gazed at my father. It confused me, but the gentle happiness which was so evident between my parents gave my heart warmth and my mind peace. My mother had been preparing herself for this moment since the day she exchanged vows with my father on their wedding day. She has spent the last months preparing for his departure by learning how to file taxes and other important information that will keep our lives afloat during my father's deployment. She knew one day she would have to say goodbye, but nothing could have prepared her for this day.

The camouflage the wall had provided me was soon broken when a sneeze escaped my nose. The embrace between my parents ended when I entered the room. My father bent down to kiss my forehead. The way he pressed his lips against my forehead and wrapped his hand around the back of my head felt like a silent goodbye; closure that he would be leaving me to grow into a young woman on my own. A way to say goodbye without risking the tears that would come with a verbal farewell.

After pulling away and looking into my eyes with a slight smile and eyes glazed with moisture, my father exited the room to dress himself in the jacket that gave me such uneasiness. We all followed his lead, as we always have, and dressed ourselves as well. I laced my pink shoes as my father laced his pale green ones, and my brother, although too young to yet master the skill, pretended to do the same. My mother stayed behind a few moments longer in the kitchen. She returned to us, cheeks moist with tears, eyes red with sadness. She picked up my baby brother, as if to try to distance him from the sadness hovering inside our home, and walked toward the front door.

We exited our home as a family one last time. My father walked through the door last, spending as much time as possible in the normality he will be leaving behind. A photograph of my parents on their wedding day hanging on the wall was the last object my father contemplated before closing the door behind him and joining us at the bottom of the damp concrete stairs leading away from our gloomy townhome. The car ride to the military base was long and silent. My father's hand never left my mother's, and I couldn't keep myself from wishing their embrace could last forever.

Once we reached the center of the base, my father was torn away from us, forced into a line next to men who looked and dressed all the same. Surrounded by crying mothers and confused children, I pushed myself through the crowd trying to make contact with my father one last time. A man who was a stranger to me and my family ordered me back into the crowd of families, as if I had somehow become a soldier myself. The confusion overwhelmed me into tears, and I could do nothing but stand in one place and watch my father being taken away from me. He turned around and mouthed "I love you princess" one last time before he disappeared into the dark doorway of the building behind us. After the chaos came silence. It was the same silence that gave me apprehension this morning when I woke up. I didn't think this moment would ever come. He's gone. They took him away.

I walked with my mother and baby brother back to the car, with a paper American flag in one hand and the other occupied by my mother's hand; the same hand my father's hand had once took so firmly. The sky was still dark, and the raindrops that awoke me this morning once again started to fall. The paper American flag slipped from my hand. Maybe it was the rain, or maybe I dropped it out of anger knowing this flag was the reason my father was no longer with me, of this I am still not sure.

The milestones of my elementary school life would never be shared with my father. On back-to-school night, only one parent would get to read the note I would leave for them the night before. Christmas morning would not be as magical without my father, and my birthday wishes were all dedicated to his safe return. Our family struggled to find normality in a world where my father was thousands of miles away in a war zone.

Back-to-school nights throughout elementary school always raised questions when only one parent sat in front of my miniature school desk. Father's Day consisted of staying up late to make a phone-call to account for the time change, and my birthday parties were spent wishing my best friend wasn't so far away. Overall, my dad was gone for a total of about three years. I don't remember all the small moments which happened while my father was away, but some things will stay in my mind forever. Starting school again the next year was more difficult than anyone would have suspected. My mom would have to bring me to my teacher an hour earlier than the other boys and girls at my school. This allowed me to escape the embarrassment as I would scream, cry, and cling to my mother's leg, begging the only source of normality I could connect with not to leave me. It wasn't fair. All the other kids would go home after school, and a hug or a kiss from their dads would be waiting for them. I came home to a crying mother who had to take on the role of not only mother of two, but head of the household as well. But, I guess all of this was the price you have to pay when you have a soldier as a father.

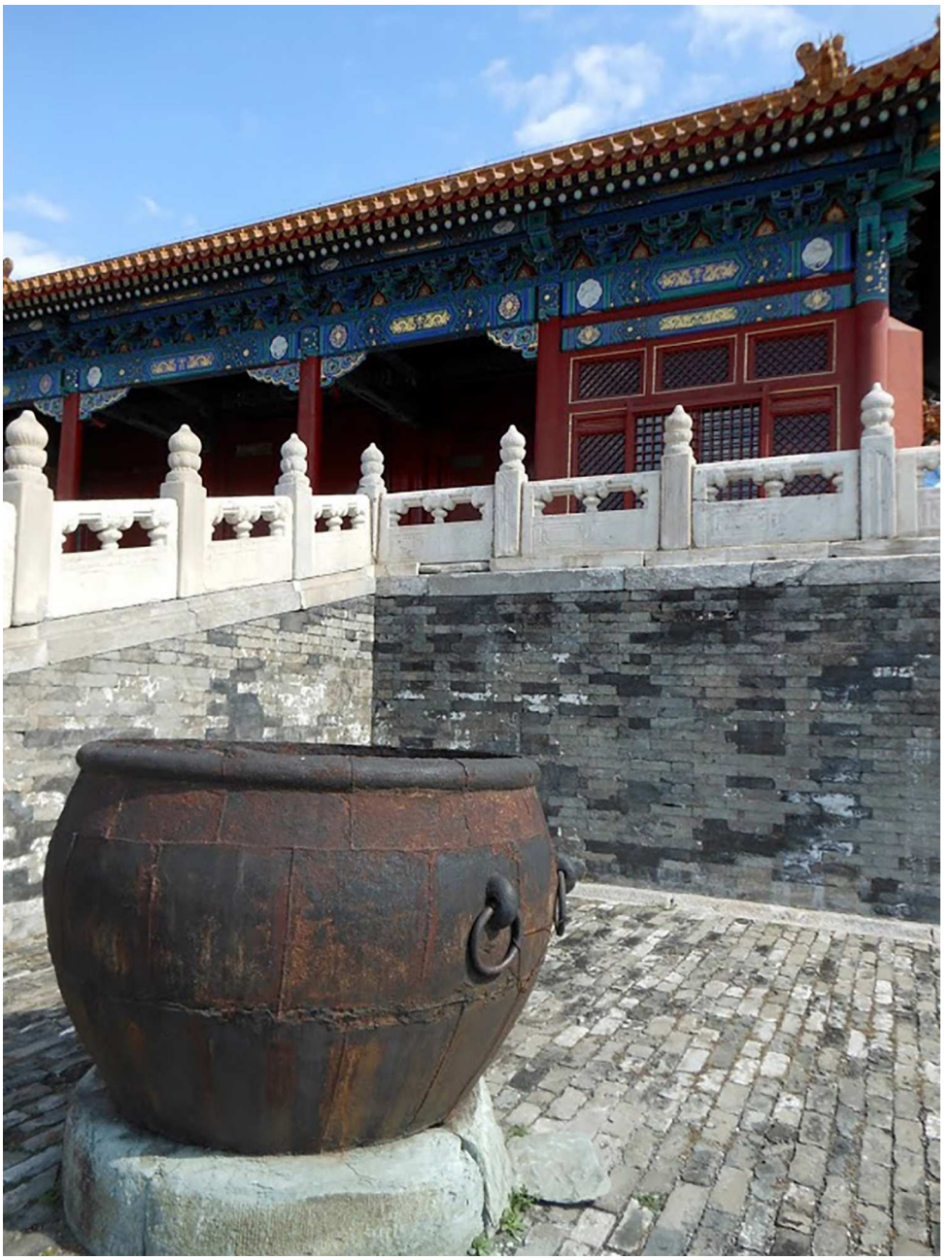
Huong Nguyen Vu

Owl

Computer Graphics

Alexandra Nava Ruis Tecco

Bronze Water Urn
Forbidden City, Beijing, China



Digital Photography

Luis Antonio Navas-Reyes

Keep the Courage Alive!

Mixed Media

Caitlyn "Cat" Savage

Find Another Savior

I'm not your manic pixie dream girl
I'm not your heroine in white
Don't expect me to save you
I can barely save myself.

My hair isn't short
I wear converse and t-shirts
I'm such an emotional mess
I can't tell what way is up

I prefer pop over indie
And my room is a mess of *Seventeens* and *Vogue*.
I won't leave the comfort of my room
I won't fix your doom

I'm not your manic pixie dream girl
I'm not your heroine in white
Don't expect me to save you
I can barely save myself.

I know what you're looking for
I'm not her
I'm not your
Manic pixie dream girl.

Muzhda Sabira Ghafoori

Still

The streets are quiet for me tonight
And tears sit loud in still, bright rooms.

I swear I heard my father's pride
Beat sticks against broken fences.

A lonely mass of child boy
Huddled against a wind
Of insecurities
Howling, raging, deafening, he.
Jarring cracks into the whitest cottage
You will ever see
Beating breaks upon the open windows
Uproot the floor beneath
Flying fists into the polished walls
But the baker sleeps so soundly!

Some two-week-old cold gingerbread
Sits in the middle of the room.

Trembling hands of a lost little boy
Weave memories into the flour.
I swear my hands would knead that dough
Hour after hour!
I swear I watched that cottage sink,
Beneath an open flame!
I swear that boy would eat me up
Before salvation came!
I swear my mother's feeble heart
Would outlast the monsoons here
The rooms—
So unnaturally still—
Make snare drums out of tears.

Calliope Second Prize 2015 - Fiction

Hannah Glaser

The Bet

I used to ride the bus to work every day it rained. Somehow the sight of a grey sky and rivers running down the streets didn't exactly scream, "Hop on your motorcycle! It'll be fun!" to me, and I didn't have a car back then. Anyway, the bus wasn't so bad. Better than wringing out my socks in the employee's bathroom for fifteen minutes before my shift.

So I took the bus. The nice thing about it was that I could listen to music on the way there. Pop on some headphones, flop against the pole (or into a seat if I was lucky) and just zone out for forty-five minutes. Nice. Nobody ever bothers you when you have headphones on; it's like some unspoken rule. It's a glorious thing. Or that's what I always thought, before I met this one guy.

At first I just ignored him, 'cause, you know, I figured, No way. He ain't trying to talk to me, I've got headphones on. But I kept seeing him out of the corner of my eye, waving at me, lips moving, trying to make eye contact. So much for the "unspoken rule." Fine, I'll bite. Maybe he's just trying to be helpful. Maybe I've got a twenty-dollar bill sticking to my shoe that he's trying to tell me about. Screw it. It's Monday, it's raining, and I'm stuck on the bus. I might as well make my day interesting.

"I'm sorry, are you talking to me?" I pulled one of the speakers away from my ear and looked him in the eye. He looked… well, he looked like a normal guy, just in a bad spot. Nice clothes: slacks, polo, belt, dress shoes. Red waterproof jacket, kind of cheap looking, unzipped. Wet hair all messed up. The kind of eyes that seemed permanently wide and excited about something. He looked like he worked in an office, but lower down on the totem pole, you know what I mean? Put together but falling apart.

He smiled, showing his teeth.

"Yeah… Yeah, I'm talking to you. You wanna make a bet?"

"I'm sorry?"

"A bet. Do you wanna make a bet with me?"

I stared. He stared back. I still had my headphone's speaker held out an inch or two from my ear. Slowly, I let it fall back into place and averted my eyes towards the ceiling. Shucks, fella, too bad. Looks like I'd rather take the boring Monday, after all. Beats getting knifed on the city's finest in public transportation by a nutjob.

But he didn't give up. Dang it, where the hell are all the other people? Do I seriously gotta be stuck here alone with this guy? Yep, looked like it. Fantastic.

"HEY!" he yelled, all of a sudden. Okay, I'm officially justified. I whipped my headphones off, letting them hang around my neck.

"WHAT?" I reply.

"That's better." He smiles again, completely at ease. We sit there for a moment, him leaning back in his plastic chair, and me dumbfounded.

"Look, do you have something you wanna say to me, or – "

"I want you to make a bet with me."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"I'm bored."

"And that's my problem?"

"No, it's your lucky day."

"I'm not following."

"Five hundred dollars. Make a bet with me." He smiled in satisfaction, head resting on the back of his chair. He was smiling like a cat. You know the way they smile. Like they've got you wrapped around their creepy little paws. Uh, waiter, check please? I've had enough of this crap.

"Look, dude, I don't – "

"I have five hundred dollars that I don't give a s--- about. Make a bet with me. Anything. Tell me the sky is gonna turn red! I don't care!" He waved his hand in the air and let it fall. "Think of something. Anything."

"You… should probably think twice about that, man."

He laughed, suddenly, openly. It was a good laugh, like a real laugh. It sounded like his first laugh in a long time. He let it go for a while, starting it up again a few times when it began to die down. He closed his eyes and leaned his head back all the way, just laughing. I was mesmerized. I just kept watching this guy. After a little while, I figured I probably looked like the crazy one. Finally, he opened his eyes again, and went on a little calmer.

"I'm bored. I'm desperate. So sue me." He looked me right in the eye.

Fine.

"The bus'll break."

At first he was surprised. I was, too.

"What?"

"The bus. It'll break. Before I get to work."

"Done!" He paused, then he grinned. Then it hit me. Of all things, the bus breaking? Like, really? What are the odds of that?! Way, to go, brain! So, great, genius; either I get to walk to work in the rain, or I lose out on five hundred bucks! Five hundred bucks. It might not have meant anything to this guy, but that was a hell of a lot to me. Five hundred bucks was a month's worth of my share of the rent, and a little extra besides. Five hundred bucks was the difference between groceries and sneaking tomorrow's breakfast home from work. I swear I could have kicked myself.

"So where do you work?" His voice snapped me back to reality.

"Uh… Fifth and Main. There's a sandwich shop there. "Mack's.""

"Fifth and Main… that's about ten minutes away." He stopped and thought to himself. My throat dried up.

"Yep."

"Ten minutes…"

The bus rolled along, and suddenly everything felt quiet. The raindrops were running into the windows and trailing off in streams, the sounds of their collective suicides blurring into a drawn-out percussive rhythm. Massive brakes designed to stop thousands of pounds of metal and sleepy commuters screeched and groaned at every turn and threw the compartment into a lurch. I held onto the metal pole limply, tasting my heartbeat in my mouth. Why hadn't I sat that day, with every chair but one to choose from? My knees felt weak.

"I think I've got a timer on my phone!"

Seriously, man? He pulled it out and messed around with the screen. A second later, he threw me a thumbs up and went back to fiddling with the thing. I wanted to throw it out of the window.

"You… really don't care if you lose five hundred dollars?"

"Nope!" he was ecstatic.

"Look, seriously, we can call this thing off –"

"Nine minutes!" I really hated him.

"Okay, man, look, I don't have five hundred –"

"That's what makes it exciting!"

Rain. It had to rain. Those stupid little clouds up there just had to go so freaking badly- No. This isn't helping. Come on. This guy is crazy, just don't play his game! I looked towards the end of the bus where the driver sat, oblivious to the life that was slowly unraveling a few steps behind him.

"I can't pay you, alright? It doesn't matter who wins! Forget about it; never mind!"

"Oh, come on! Have a little faith in yourself!" he laughed, almost giggling. I started to panic.

"You're crazy. I don't have to deal with this."

"Eight minutes!"

"Would you stop counting?! The bet is off!"

"Can't do that!"

"Watch me."

Our eyes locked and our bodies swayed as the vehicle tried to make up its mind between forward motion and lateral sashay. The grey world around us was smeared by the glass, making it look like a bad memory. We passed a red neon sign that shattered into pieces and reassembled itself as it flew by the wet panes.

He glared in defiance. Finally, he looked down at his phone, deliberately, and slowly read the time:

"Six minutes."

"Please. I don't have the money."

"But you could. You still have six minutes."

"But I won't." He stared back at me.

"Fine. It's up to you. You've got five and a half minutes left, but it's up to you. I'll give you thirty seconds to change your mind, if you really want to. Take it or leave it."

"Thank you. Yes, let's just forget about it, okay? I don't want to make a bet with you."

"Fine. It's off."

I breathed. A moment passed before I realized how ridiculous it was for me to feel so relieved. I mean, really, it's not like there was anything he could've done even if I did wind up owing him. What, was he gonna send some guy to break my legs? I smiled at myself and almost started laughing at what a moron I'd –

But see, that's when the bus broke.

Reona Lynch

Colors of the Blind

Computer Graphics

Sydney Kim

Born a Wild Boy with Matchsticks for Hands

But the sun can't shine
in your throat
without burning your
honey coated neck,
singeing your salt pink tongue.
And I've seen your sea rimmed eyes
drink in the stale world.
Shards and all.
You're the kind of brave
I wished to be.
The kind of brave I ran from.
Always insisting on swallowing
such pretty things.

Brian Tuan Dang

The Kiss

Ballpoint Pen

Calliope Third Prize 2015 - Fiction

Alexandra Nava Ruiz Tecco

Following Procedures

When I first got here they took my shoes. "It's just a precaution," they said.

After a few hours I understood. It takes truly crazy kids to run half naked down the halls, feet slapping on cold linoleum, thinking they can escape those bouncer-bodied orderlies. In the hands of any of those kids, shoelaces become deadly weapons. Granted, pilfering my Nikes would've made more sense had the blinds not had drawstrings long enough to string up half the ward.

But they don't care about details. It's all about "procedures," until they let us out.

#

"Salisbury steak again?" I ask. Sid, my apparel twin in his thin, blue, acute inpatient outfit, looks back at me, rolling his eyes, like I should know better.

The defunct lunch lady just slaps the runny mashed potatoes on my tray and then snaps her head mechanically for me to move on. That's always her response. Slap, snap. Slap, snap. It must be in the handbook.

We get our silverware from Ms. Pearson; they don't trust us to get our own. She knows our "capability" of handling the cafeteria universe and its utensils by sight. None of us know how she decides what cutlery is dispensed to whom, but we put daily deserts on the line trying to figure out her system.

"Hello Ms. Pearson." I smile and shuffle my feet a bit.

It's a dance you learn to do in here. It's easier and draws less attention than the wounded animal move of literally rolling over to display your belly.

"May I have a knife for my steak today?" I ask. "It's my last meal y'know."

She likes it when you use her name. A schizo taught me the trick a few months ago. The guppies, newer kids who dress in green because they're usually here for a mini-vacation rather than a long term stay, will hopefully pick up on my experience to help them a bit. It's the little things that get you by. Like the game Sid and I play, seeing who is more trusted with the cheap plastic utensils today.

They gave him a spoon. It's rare that they give him anything else.

Ms. Pearson looks me up and down, eyes resting on my plastic bracelet, yellowed from age, then back to my eyes. She hands me a knife, a spoon, no fork, then hefts herself onto her stool, smiling.

She really loves her jokes.

The guppies are all sitting together, safety in numbers you know, and look at me with awe because of the knife on my tray. They ignore Sid and his eternal spoon, probably out of fear, and don't notice that I'm missing a fork. I don't sit with them, which means I don't get news about the outside, but it gets tiring listening to them after a while because guppies always sound the same.

"So what'd you do?" one of the guppies whispers to me while envying my blade and blue acute inpatient threads.

The reason any of us are in doesn't really matter. It's just how the guppies greet everyone.

"Mom wouldn't leave me alone so I broke all the light bulbs in my house till she called the cops."

I swipe his brownie while he stares, confused.

I learned to shrug instead of attempting to explain. How can I when the reason I did it doesn't make any sense? I don't even get it. It just made sense at the time.

So instead I sit by myself, in my designated corner, with my extra dessert, not talking to guppies. Sid has his own corner, he had it when I got here. I acquired my corner when one by one the others wearing blue before me moved on.

#

After lunch is group. The point is to sit there and listen to how bad everyone has it. Sid, "suffering from IED," simply translated as an acute case of "tired of the Docs lying to him about going home", always sits opposite the leader's chair. He does this so no matter which way they duck, duck, goose he's always in the middle of the conversation, and also the farthest from the door. Sid likes having the space to toss chairs. Of course inevitably he gets removed, banned from group for a while, like it's a privilege to attend, and eventually allowed back where the whole procedure starts again.

The Docs have been telling him he can go home for years now. We've decided it's a new treatment attempting to get him to "control his anger." They tell him he can go home, get his hopes up, then they change their mind, so of course he flips.

It's an endless cycle.

If he just shrugged instead of chucking seating arrangements he could go home; "treatment a success." But he wants out so badly that shrugging ain't an option.

I was told to "use their lines, play their games" and I follow that advice to a T, even swallowing enough pills to make my insides a permanent rainbow. Consequently, I've

finally made a "breakthrough," meaning I get to go home today. Poor old Sid's gonna lose it.

"So? How is everyone doing today?"

Ms. Strickland always starts group this way. Everyone responds to it in the same way too, mumbling into their hands. I try to avoid notice like usual.

"You look awfully chipper!" she says looking at me. I always did suck at poker. "So let's start with you. Why the smile?"

"Well, I talked to my mom yesterday and the Doctors said that I have made some really good breakthroughs since coming here. And may I say," I cross my legs and interlace my fingers, the very picture of every Doctor in session at the ward, "that I really appreciate all your help Ms. Strickland, and of course my Doctors'. I've gotten to know myself better and understand now that emotions are not bad and there are positive ways to handle frustration and anger."

Feeling words, they love them. The joke goes that you can't tell a shrink that you're on fire unless you explain first how being immolated makes you feel. Granted, then they'll require an hour of delving further before they get a damned extinguisher.

"Well that's so nice to hear, but I think there's been a misunderstanding," she says, her brow furrowing. She looks down at her clipboard and flips through some papers.

Sid snorts in the corner. I uncross my legs and rub my sweaty hands down the thin cotton of the pants, equally thin regulation slipper sliding off one foot.

"Huh?" is my eloquent response.

"Well yes, the doctors under further review and, speaking with your parents, decided that you should be observed a bit more. I'm sorry if you misunderstood."

"See? It's all bullshit!" Sid yells, standing up.

He clutches his chair and throws it at the orderlies rushing in on their cue. Sid turns around to pick up another chair, the guppies barely having time to scatter before it's flying across the room as Sid grabs a third. The orderlies duck the flying chairs and tackle his legs, making Sid hit the floor with a resounding crunch. As they all go down in a pile of arms and legs, the sea of green guppies leap up, encouraging chants filling the room. I stay in my chair, I've nothing to fear from him.

All I can think of are the lies they told me, smug smiles on their faces, paging through my chart on their desks. Even the acutes before me in their wise blue robes, fed me their lines of advice. It all hits to the gut and I grip the sides of my chair, something solid in the swirling scene as Sid breaks free again.

Oh god, only Sid is left.

I've watched all the others leave.

I've never thrown a chair, always taken my meds, done everything they've ever wanted and it's only me now.

Me.

And Sid.

"But, but why?" I ask. "I'm supposed to leave today. I'm packed."

Ms. Strickland doesn't hear, or chooses not to, as she calmly stands up and moves a safe distance away to oversee the commotion. I don't try to ask again so I watch, unable to move, not bothering to try.

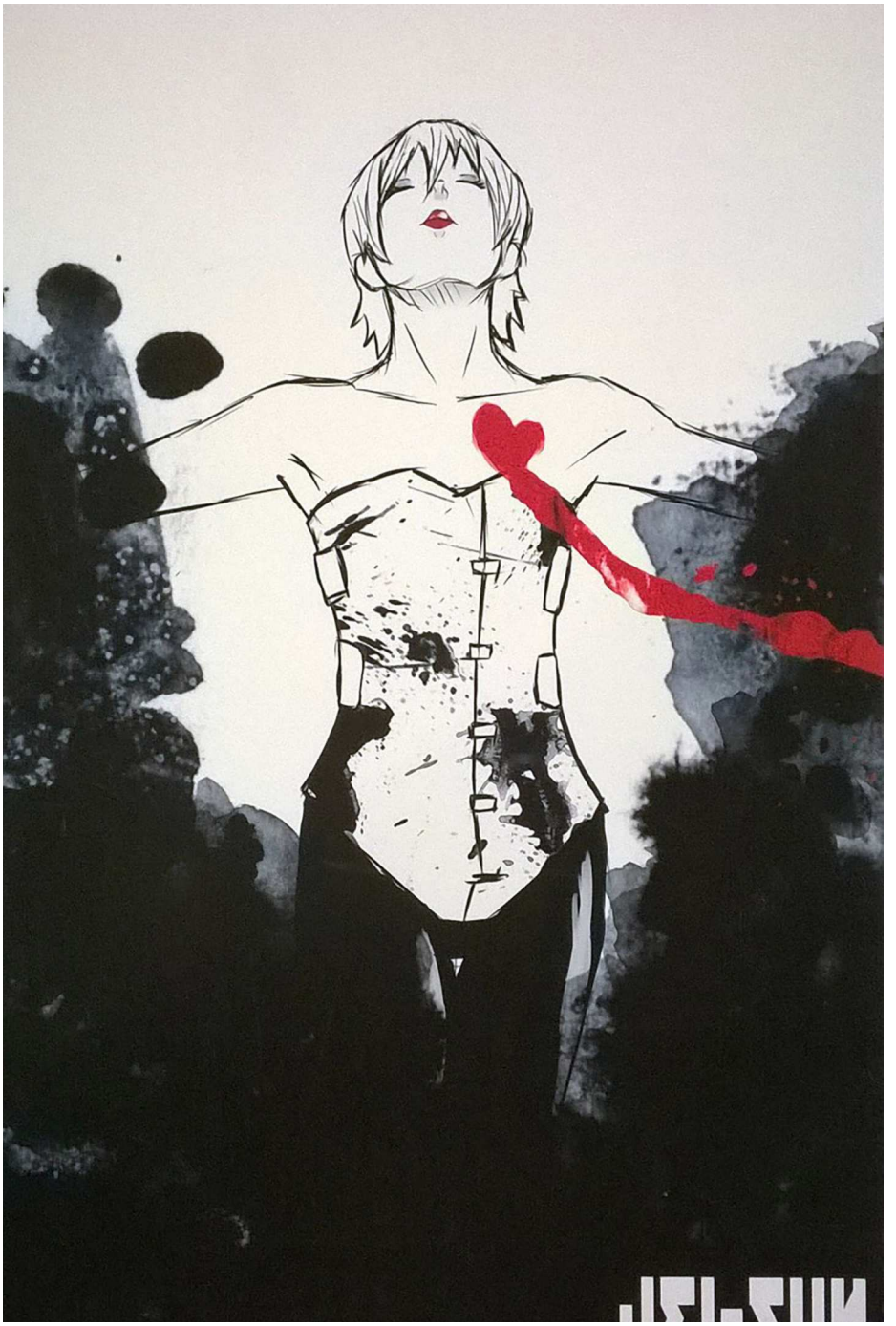
Sid was a gangly boy, already in his blues when I first got here. He sat alone meek and scared in the corner giving his desserts to the guppies coming in so they wouldn't pick on him. Now it takes grown men to handle him.

I'm still in my seat as the sixth orderly rushes in to help carry Sid out and down the hall. The men are barely able to control his flailing adolescent body. Ms. Strickland turns to look at me, mechanically tilting her head. She turns her head again, away from me to shush boys, ignoring the question still half formed on my lips.

All I can hear are Sid's screams echoing down the hall as the leather straps tighten down on him. Then, "protecting" us all, they silence his protests, just following their procedures, shutting the soundproof door.

Jason Walter (Jei-Sun)

The Fifth Dimension



Computer Graphics

Casey Robbins

August 28, 1963

I am there. Standing on my own two tired feet.
I am there listening to this man with a smile full of cheeks
And eyes full of crow's feet,
His wrists once bound by the manacles of steel in a Birmingham jail
That may as well have been slave shackles tied to a ship rail.
Now, they're replaced by cuffs of white adorned with links of gold
And an outstretched hand where hope and peace take hold.
He stands in the shadow of a giant to finish what he started
This noble orator to deliver a proclamation to us
Which resonates through time on the field of justice like a battle drum.
I am there.
I am there because I am the black man standing in back.
I am the white cop, and the child holding his dad's hand.
I am the lady dressed in her Sunday best
And I am the baby sleeping on her mother's chest.
And I am every man, woman and child with straight, curly or kinky hair
I am there because you were there.
But it took us some time to get there
Hundreds of years of hopeless despair
Because darkness dominated the sense of discern
And limited our visibility to see the path concerned.
The path to freedom that darkness consumed
Where slavery, racism and segregation loomed.
But the sun begins to rise anew and shed its truth
Over this path.
Now, in this temple as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the union
The memory of Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King and every Human being
Who ever fought the flames of withering injustice is enshrined forever.
We were all there. We are all here.
We are here to collect what's owed to us as heirs
We are here because there were some who dared
To plan and scheme to rob us of our dignity.
We are there to collect on this dream.
And we are not interested in picking up the crumbs of compassion
Thrown from the table of one who calls himself our master.
Because our freedom is inextricably bound
And our humanity found in each other.
And if you're neutral then you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

No, we cannot walk this path alone, we must walk it together.
As we walk, we must make this pledge
That we shall always march ahead
'Cause I could not be here if you weren't there.

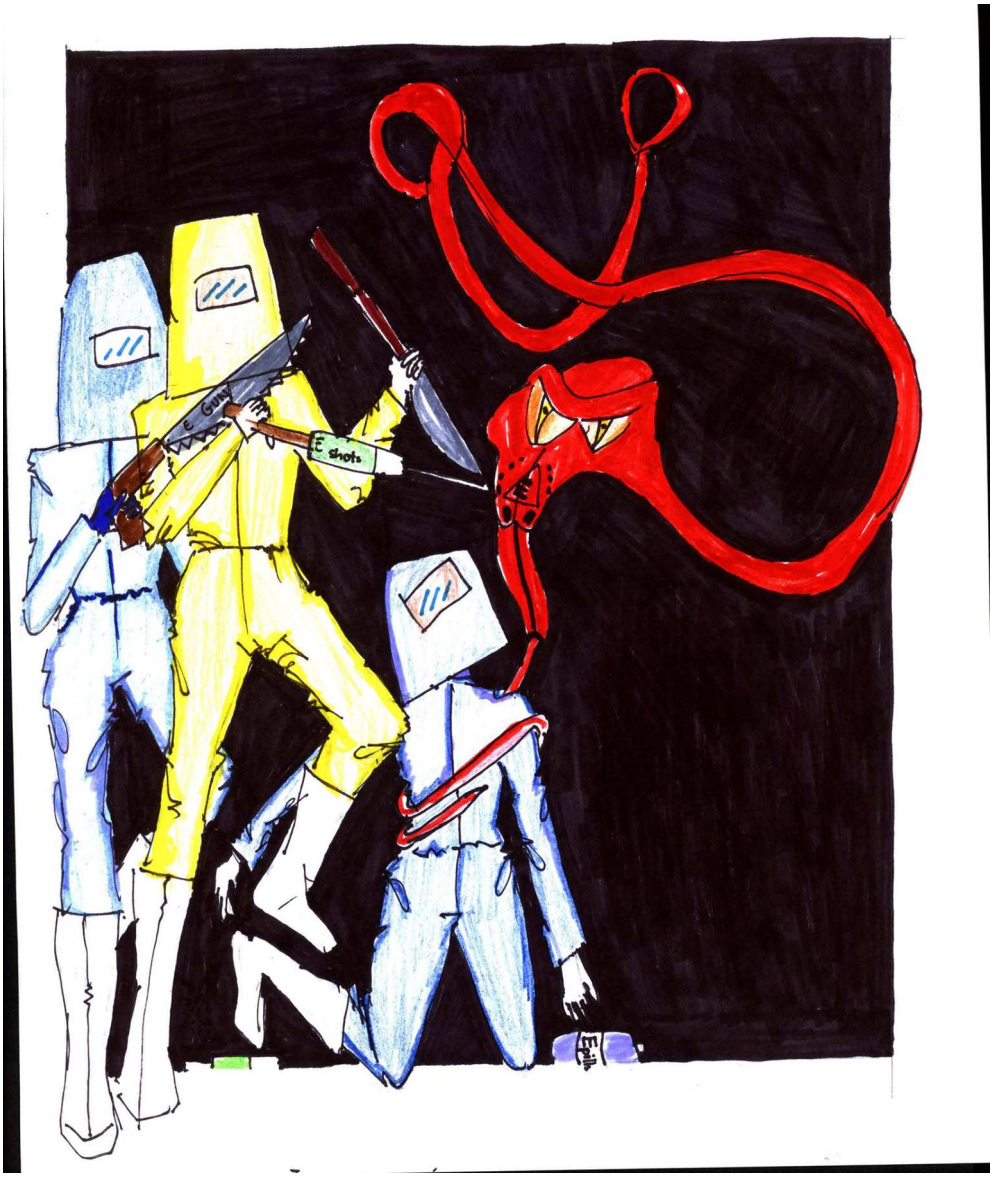
Ali Orokzai

Colorful Autumn Breeze

Photography

Mame Ndoumbe Alimatou Casse

Ebola



Colored Pencils and Markers

Sydney Kim

We're Too Busy Covering Battle Wounds to Shake Hands

I think you're sorry but don't know how
to place the words in your mouth.
And I don't expect you to. How can you?
How can anyone explain the crooked sound
of trees' necks breaking as if it were our own?
We were wet sky split down the middle,
cleaved in two. Halves of broken moon
falling back on each other like
young tides racing for shore.
And how do we part seas when the airs
still bristle when our skin sticks?
Where do we go when heaviness becomes
more than weight?
When all my tongue confesses is
"I am heaviness" like the Lord's prayer?
I think you're sorry but I know everything
left to say tastes like ash and will
leave a bitter aftertaste.

Dolores Erendira Cevallos Perez

A Precious Gift

Everybody loves presents. I particularly like the gifts that people make with their own hands because it means that they are leaving part of their life on them. On my birthday, I've received all kinds of presents, some of which people have dedicated time and effort, and others that were probably gifts that they received and never used. However, the most wonderful birthday gift I received came from heaven twelve years ago, the day that I became an aunt. When I first saw my niece, Macarena, she was so small and frail. Her arms and legs were thin like reeds, but her eyes were wide open trying to understand what was going on. Those eyes expressed all the things that she couldn't say. Where am I? ... Oh! Is that you? The one who spoke to me every night? ... Since the first time I saw her, she stole my heart. Now I treasure all those wonderful memories. Although time has passed, and now she's twelve years old, I still think of her as my little baby.

I started to love her even before she was born. The excitement that my sister would have a baby was like having one on my own. I used to speak to her while she was in my sister's belly, so she started to recognize my voice; she also moved and kicked inside like she was trying to communicate with me. She loved classical music, especially Vivaldi. Seeing her moving and stretching inside was wonderful.

After she was born, we got even closer. It was a beautiful feeling when she fell asleep in my arms or when my sister waited for me to come from work with everything ready for the baby's bath. My mother used to iron her clothes and keep them warm. I was the one who washed her, and my sister was ready to put her clothes on. Those are very lovely memories. When she was a toddler people used to think that she was my daughter. From four to almost eight years old, she resembled me a lot. We had the same skin type; her hair was light brown with natural highlights that surrounded her face. She had a tiny nose, defined lips and very big and expressive eyes. While she was growing, she started to change. Now she looks a little bit different. Her face shape now is longer. Her eyes are smaller and lighter but still expressive. Her hair is a little bit darker, abundant, and longer.

Now, Macarena has become a very happy but responsible kid. She likes to study but also enjoys playing with her father and her grandfather in her free time. She loves animals, especially her pets. She says that they're part of the family. Her temperament is very similar to mine too, so it's easy for me to understand her. Probably this is the reason why we are very close. We love to spend time together. When I'm in my country, we like to go to the movies or simply watch a movie at home. We love to bake and make desserts, and I think it's good for her to learn how to do things by herself. Even now that I'm in the United States, and far from her, we try to share our time. We make

video calls through Skype, paint our nails, and also cook. I do it from here and she from Ecuador, but it's still funny. Now that we're not physically together, I try harder to keep our communication. I still want to share her memories while she grows.

I think all kinds of love are different, but the love of an aunt is special because not only can I be a mother, without all the responsibility that this involves, but also I can be her friend, with whom she can share her secrets, problems and happy moments. Not everybody has the luck of being parents but at least having a baby around makes life different. After my niece was born, my attitude about life changed in a positive way. I can't explain exactly why but I'm sure she gave me strength, hope, and happiness.

Ali Orokzai

Black, White & Red Love

Photography

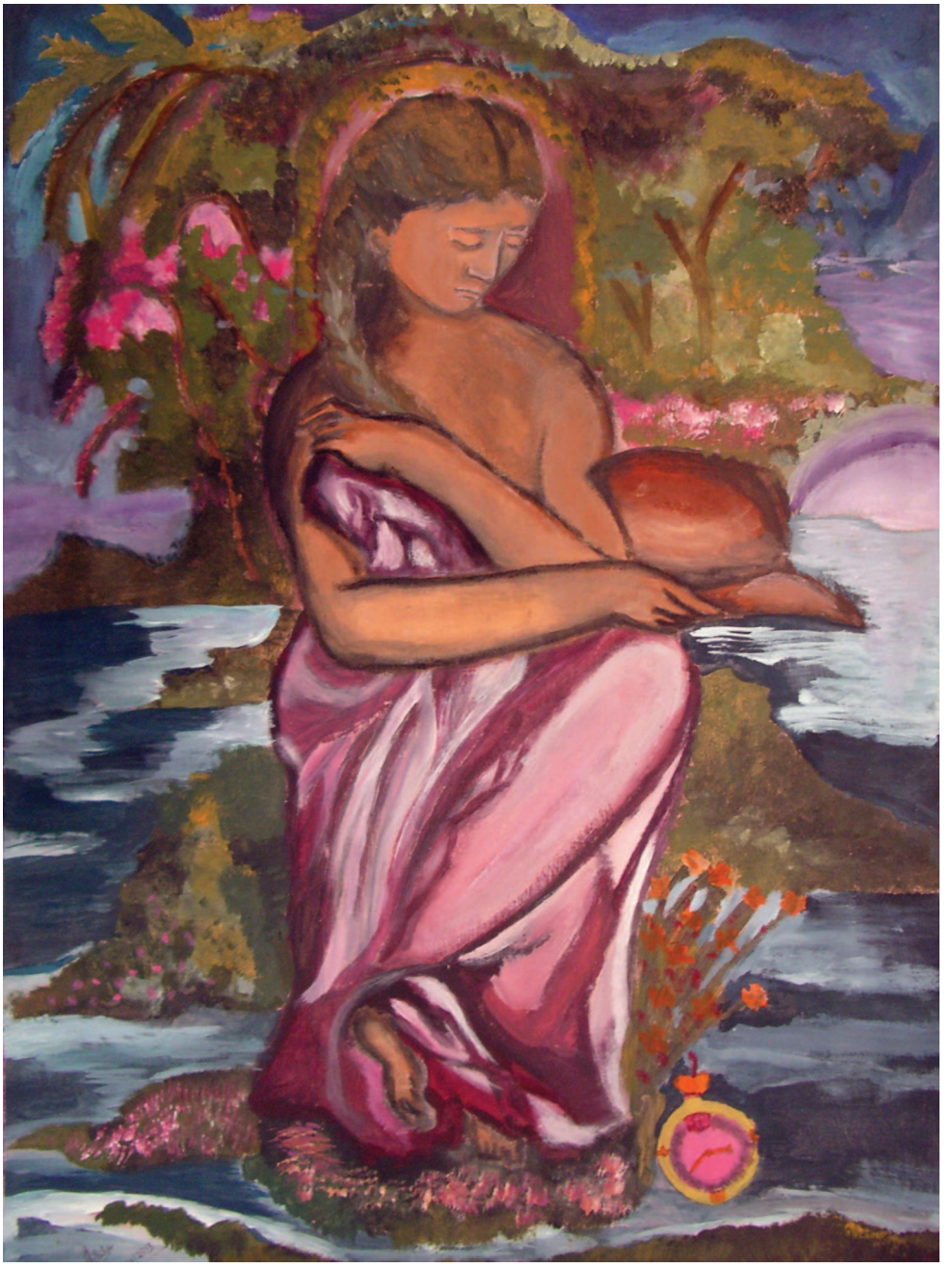
Marlena Joanna Bludzien

Rania

Pencil Drawing

Ashita Adhikari

A Lost Mind, the Dawn and Silence



Painting

Rosemarie C. Camara

Little Miss Know-It-All

"Who wrote Exodus?" "Evil principle of the Persian faith?" "Son of Odin?"

Knowing the answer of even one of these questions makes you a cultured American. Now, imagine if these questions were answered by an eight-year-old Peruvian little girl with no other education than regular third grade. But these were the questions I had to answer every Sunday morning to be able to hang out with dad. Sundays were Giant Geniograma day, a very difficult kind of crossword puzzle and my dad's favorite pastime; also, my introduction to literature, research, and higher knowledge.

I can still smell the coffee combined with the saltiness of the beach air. I can easily hear the sad boleros my dad used to listen to very loud every Sunday morning, the kind of music you can only hear in a Peruvian dive bar that sang about cheating couples, long lost loves, and torrid romances with the bottle. My dad did not drink, nor date anyone after his divorce from my mom; however, he loved this kind of music.

I was never an early riser, but Sunday mornings meant I got to hang out with dad doing what he loved to do. I remember myself springing out of bed and running to the dining room table and finding him there, behind about five different volume encyclopedias, world maps, massive history books, and different versions of Spanish and English-Spanish dictionaries. You really could not see him behind all of it, so it was my moment to scare him. Let's face it, he knew I was coming, but he loved to pretend I scared him into a coronary. We would laugh all the time.

At the beginning I would sit beside him and just watch him as I had breakfast. There he was, static in the chair, staring intently at the clues, quickly pulling a book, finding and writing the answer to go back to sitting still. This process would repeat a lot and it began to look like a routine. One day I timidly asked if I could help, maybe looking up a word in any of the dictionaries, or perhaps looking at a space chart for the name of an obscure constellation in the northern hemisphere. I remember being amazed at him always pulling the right book for me, so I asked: "Dad, how do you know which is the right book to look in for the answer?" He looked at me, lowered his glasses to the edge of his nose and said to me: "To solve Geniogramas, you have to really understand the questions. Once you do, experience will tell you where to find the answers."

He was right. They had very short clues. Some had only one name (Tchaikovsky) and a symbol (☒). At the beginning I had no idea where to look, but as I continued helping him, I could now read the clues in the puzzle and found myself knowing exactly where to look. I knew then I was to look for a musical piece by the referenced

composer:

Swan Lake! Sometimes, the first book I looked in would lead me to a second encyclopedia and then to a third, but I would not rest until I found the answer. The thrill of it was infectious and sometimes we would sit there until lunch was served just solving the clues. It was so much fun to learn new things. Sometimes a clue would be so interesting or difficult to find it would make me read more about it.

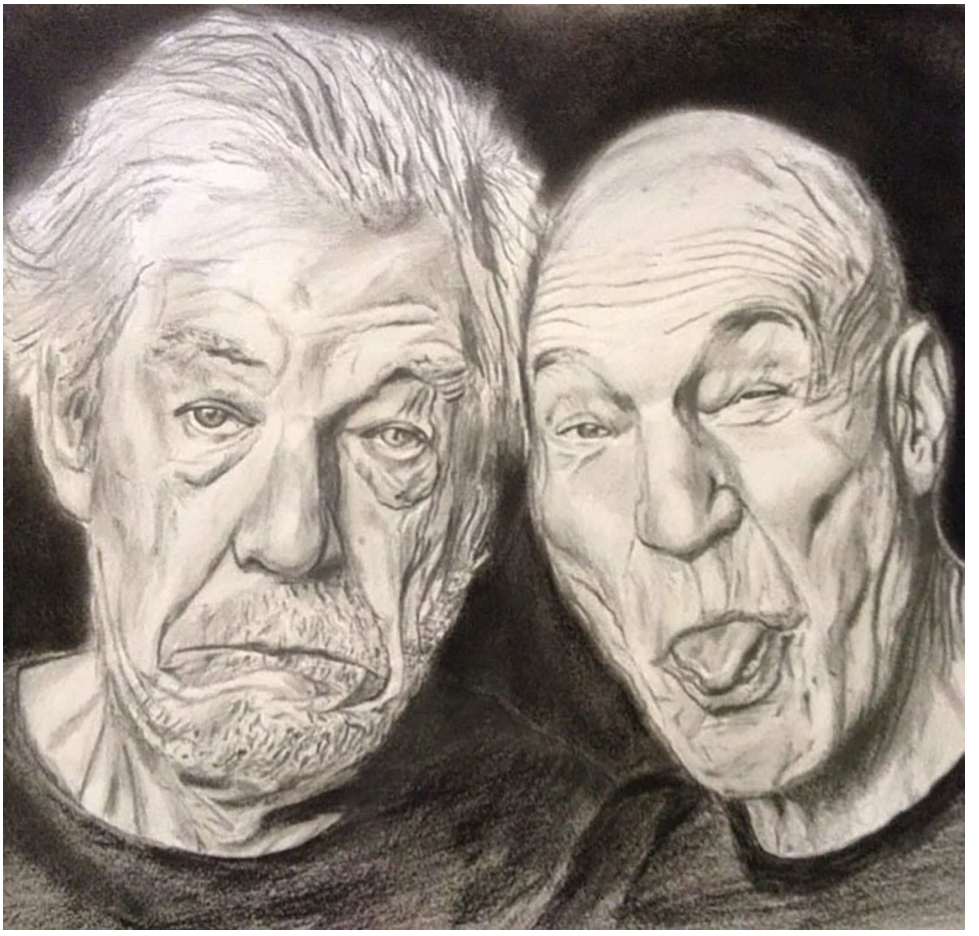
At the age of ten I had already read books by Dostoyevsky, Gorki, Stevenson, and Tolstoy. I knew the capitals of almost all the countries at the time (before the Soviet Union dissolved); world currencies; classic symphonies and their composers; and hundreds of famous pieces of art and the artists who created them. All of that without ever stepping out of my living room. I didn't have many friends then, and I was not allowed to play outside on a school day; moreover, when I did, they would tease me because I was "Little Miss Know-It-All". They would even call me "Larousse–Marie" as a play of my name and the famous French dictionary. So instead of playing with them, all I did was read everything I had at my reach, sometimes even choosing to read a book by Jane Austen over doing my homework. I did a lot of reading. My sister did a lot of my homework.

The years passed, and as my dad and I continued spending Sundays together solving them, one day I realized that I could solve many of the questions without opening any of the books. It actually became a challenge between us, who could solve it first with no help. I don't think I have ever seen my dad happier than the day I finished first without looking at any books. He looked so proud, and slightly upset I had beat him, but he didn't care.

Today, as I reminisce about those days, I look at the empty Geniogramas my dad has sent me over the years and I get sad. They stay there unsolved in the box I have put them in, waiting for me to one day have the time to solve them. As I look at one now, I can't even begin to solve any one of the clues that were so easy when I was a child. How could I do it so easily at age eight? I can't just be that stupid all of a sudden, right? This is when I remember my dad's words: "experience will tell you where to find the answers." So I asked Siri… But it is not the same without my dad.

Angela Garcia Munoz

Old Men



Pencil Drawing

Sydney Kim

Small Miracles

Give me your
moon-thread eyes
so that I may show you in thin light,
the gaping wound of flesh
flapping open in mid August from
where your icepick fingers punctured
every vital organ twice.
Mercilessly. Then recklessly.

Give me your iron fists
so that I may uncurl the anger from
your knotted knuckles. Watch. As you
unfold into me. Look. As a clenched fist
becomes a hand. For patience, darling,
is the better way to love.

Vanessa Helen Lindquist Barrie

Wake Up

"Ashley is moving to San Antonio tonight; are you interested?" my mother's voice buzzed over the telephone. I thought for a split second.

"Yeah," I responded, "come pick me up."

I was in my old neighborhood in San Diego, CA, closing my bank accounts and visiting friends. I called just to find out if I could get a ride, and suddenly my life was taking a surreal twist. I never imagined one lightning quick decision could impact my life to the degree that it did. I think it was 1997 or '98.

I had been looking for a chance to move out, and believed Ashley was friendly although I didn't spend much time with her. It was a great opportunity. Ashley was moving into her parents' trailer by a lake outside San Antonio. Her plan was to write the Great American novel. I was impressed and excited by her ambition. The rent for the trailer was incredibly cheap, and that wasn't even split in half. A lake…how picturesque…

My decision surprised my family, except my mother. They didn't know anyone who would move so far, so quickly. My mother taught me to love traveling, and she and my stepfather encouraged me to explore. She knew I would love the opportunity to go somewhere new. I was full of adrenaline, completely pumped up.

The trip there was uneventful, yet every time I hear "One Headlight" by The Wallflowers I remember being on the road that night past midnight. I had a misleading, but wonderful first week. We stayed with her family in San Antonio, discovering all the great places to visit like the River Walk. Once we actually moved in to the trailer, more than just the landscape changed. I didn't expect to be so far into the hills of Texas. We lived on a huge hill and looking out, the view was wonderful. The water--an amazing blue, with foliage that had the occasional peacock, deer, or rabbit--it seemed a paradise. Until looking down the hill, at the run-down trailers, laundry strung up to dry, the plastic chairs, and odd rusting Budweiser car with endless scattering of cigarette butts. The obvious solution being, stick to our hill and ignore everything else.

Ashley and I became friendly with our neighbors in the first week there. At first, they were just the people with all the dogs. They had about six or seven dogs; one of them was the biggest meanest Rottweiler I ever saw. This Rott was Buttkiss, and he didn't even like his owner. Sam and his wife were married under common law. They had four kids, Sam's sister, and her fiancé living in a three bedroom trailer. Needless to say, we usually sat outside with them.

Ashley and I had cabin fever set in. We went to clubs at night, until we ran out of money. I learned origami, enjoyed Scrabble by myself, and watched movies until my eyes crossed. Kat got a job at Blockbuster and she, having the only vehicle, left me alone every day. The plan had been to get jobs close together so we could carpool. That was until we realized how far we would be from civilization.

I took to calling home probably every other day by the second week. I was in an environment that was new, as I desired, but this was not a positive thing. The bar/restaurant down the hill was our only access to a phone. I felt people were crass, and I felt everyone stared at me as a frog about to be dissected.

Our only friendly neighbors became our link to the community. Sam usually entertained us with anecdotes of his outrageous, very bizarre, and twisted past, like as a teen, he used to drop acid and then dig up graves with his friends. We learned that everyone thought we were a lesbian couple. Sam kicked his sister out of the trailer because she didn't want "those lesbos" coming over. "It don't matter, she was a crackhead. I was going to kick her out anyway"

Of course, no one bothered to ask whether we were or not. Ashley was bi, and dressed masculine, and I had very short hair and stereotypical in this area women didn't wear their hair as short as mine by choice. Assumptions were made. Then I learned I was living in an area heavily populated by Texas militia and white power subscribers.

That was the beginning of the end for me. We were sitting outside, smoking, and talking. Then, Sam started telling racist jokes, and I became outraged. I finally had enough, "My father is black!" I exploded.

Butch is my stepfather, but was more of a father to me than my dad was at that time.

His wife turned to him, "I keep telling you, Sam, you need to be careful who you tell those jokes to, you never can tell. She doesn't even look Negroid" she said seriously. I still inwardly smile when I think of how serious she was.

Amazingly enough, Sam, as far as the back-hills-of-Texas was concerned, wasn't racist. "I'm not racist. I have a few black friends."

He shared some of his life with us, while we sat outside watching the sun set with one eye, and the other eye on Buttkiss. "I had a friend when I was around twelve. He was my best friend, name was Tim, and he was black. Shit, we did everything together. I loved him; he was my best friend."

Sam's voice grew warm and he had a twinkle in his eye, as he talked of the mischief he and Tim got into. "But he was black and my daddy hated him. My daddy was a member of the KKK. He was the leader of our town's chapter. Tim and I were friends, anyway. And even though my daddy hated him, that wouldn't stop me from being friends with Tim.

"Other members told me to stay away from that N---. I didn't listen. Later that week, Tim and I were playin' down the street from his house and fire engines went flying by. You could tell there was something big goin' on. We ran over and it was Tim's house on fire. It was huge, and the house was already all lit up. Tim was lookin' for his mama, and was told by the firemen that she was still in the house. He started just screamin' and screaming and ran into the house. I never saw him again."

Tears were trickling down Sam's face. "He was my best friend. My best friend."

After he finished this story, there was silence. The night seemed to stop for a few moments. The glow of the hanging lantern took in Sam's face. I never will forget the feeling in that moment. So helpless, the rage, and the loss--I was on the verge of tears.

When my neighbors told me that I shouldn't let my stepfather visit me and I shouldn't tell anyone about him, I listened to their warning. We were friends. I was shocked and

dismayed that this racism still existed in America. However, I heeded their advice because I was told that the last black family who moved there was murdered. That was about a year ago.

When I called home, my stepfather actually was trying to calmly explain it is still a fact in today's society. I was refusing to understand, but he calmed me down enough to bolt home. A club brother of Butch's motorcycle group happened to be driving through on his way to San Diego. After that ride with him, he became my "Uncle". I had no idea this hate and ignorance still existed. It was a harsh wake up call, in this day and age, there are people who hate people simply by of appearance.

Ahmad Abumraighi

Leila's Eyes

Computer Graphics

Jeannine C. Rossi

The Oboe

Hold me with gentle hand,
Oil the cork of my middle two thirds
With which caressing words
Are done. Streak of gold my bell displays
And silver patterned in circular rays
Hold the key to unlock the secret of my bore.

She, who knows of my grenadilla ancestors,
Whom I knew and was, beyond and age,
Struggles to raise my inclinations so savage
And mean, that with desperate, perspiring breath
She takes us to the ultimate test --
Behold! We let cry the first note on stage.

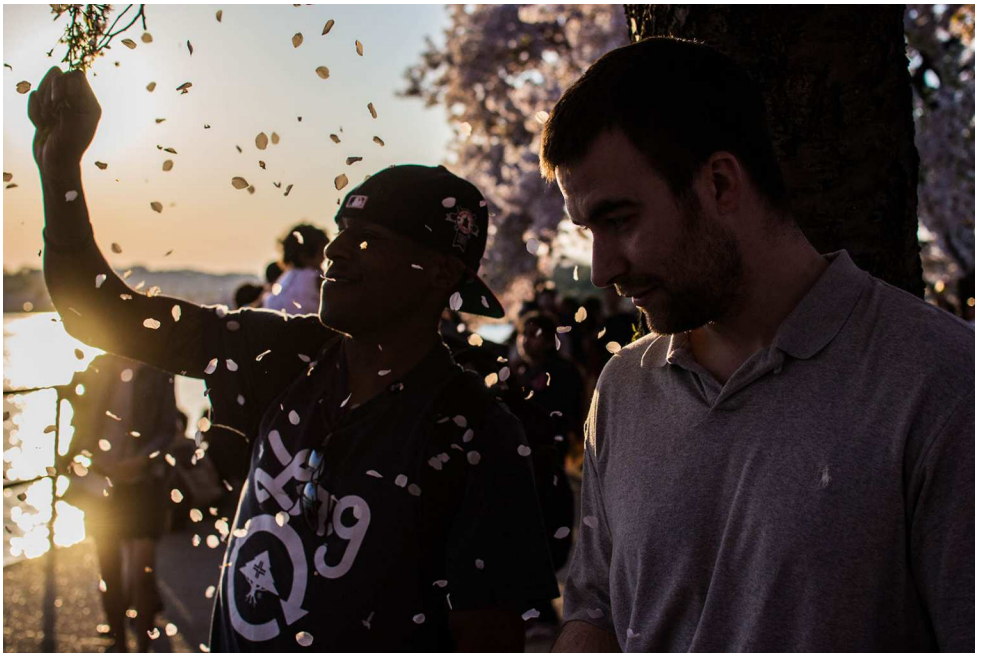
Lema Mansoury

Venetian Summer

Photography

Mark Fuentes

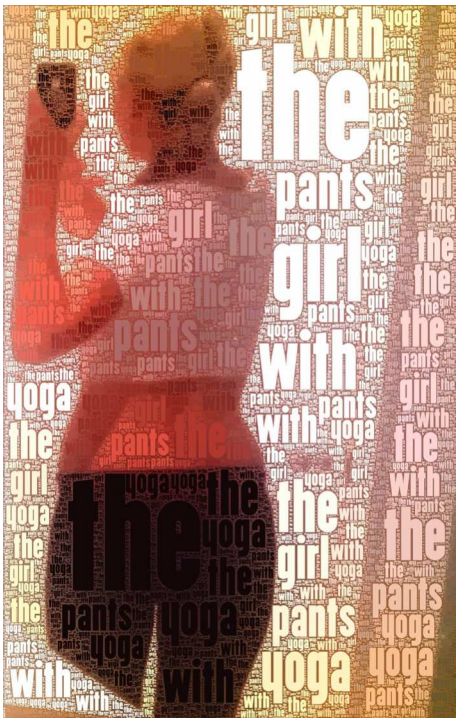
Blossoms



Photography

Sarah Burkhard

The Girl with the Yoga Pants



He watched her walking down the corridor, in her yoga pants, the braided ponytail swinging in rhythm with her steps. She passed a tinted window, shifting her head slightly to the right to study her own reflection; blurry, but not blurry enough to camouflage the imperfections of her appearance.

When she stopped to fix a loose string of hair that had fallen out of her braid, Leonard turned away. He was bored, by the unhidden display of superficiality. One .. two .. three .. five.. Now he counted the other yoga pants rushing through the corridor, leaving or entering the classrooms, and wondered when it had become so trendy to wear sports clothing outside of the gym. Good for them, he decided. Society has had worse trends than a common over-enthusiasm for health and fitness, although he wished it wasn't brands like Nike and Whole Foods that profited the most from it.

Maybe, at some point the health fanaticism will make it fashionable to harvest your own crops, hip to herd your own hens in the backyard. Fashionable, he thought bitterly, or necessary, because the food industry keeps intoxicating even the most basic foods through GMO's and mass production to a point where it's unbearable to consume the milk-free milk and meatless meat.

The thought amused him - he couldn't picture the girl working in the fields. Digging out potatoes with her bare hands, the perfectly painted nails combing through the dirt to find the precious root of the humble potato plant. Humble, because it doesn't need much to grow. It doesn't brag about its assets; it doesn't scream for attention like an apple tree with its big, colorful fruit. Back to the roots - literally. He smiled.

Dolores Erendira Cevallos Perez

I'm Rich

I totally agree with the phrase "The best things in life are free." As for my experience, I can assure everyone without any doubt that "I'm rich" and I'm not talking about money and cars, and big houses, and expensive jewelry. I'm talking about what can't be bought with money which are the people whom I've shared my life with, the experiences that have made me grow and mature, and the feelings and memories that give me strength and faith when the hard times come.

I've been very blessed with a wonderful family. My parents have been, for me, an example of unconditional love. They've never told me, "I did this for you," but I know all they gave up for my sister and me. For instance, when they decided to have a baby, my mom gave up her career as a social worker to take care of her family. She knew that no one would raise us better than she did. My father also had to work two jobs in order to be able to support us. My sister is another example of how blessed I am. Specifically, when I needed someone to help me convince my parents to let me go to a party, she helped me clean my room and put everything in order, and when I was at the party, she distracted my parents and asked them to give me one more hour. Now my husband is a big blessing to me. Every time I'm angry with him, I try to remember all the good things he has done for me; in particular, last year when I was suffering from a strong pain in my back, he took me to the chiropractor. When it didn't work, he bought me a stretching machine and gave me massages until I fell asleep. He was always trying to help me deal with the pain. After I had the surgery, he stayed all night with me at the hospital checking to make sure that I had all I needed. All the love and care that my family has given to me couldn't be bought with any money in this world.

Other things that can't be bought are the experiences. For instance, when I got my first job, the salary was very low and I wanted to quit; however, it was a very good opportunity for me to learn and practice my career. My father told me to be patient, and after one year, I found a better job with a good salary thanks to the experience I gained there. The experiences in life brought me wisdom. For instance, I remember that when I was a child, my mom always told me to use sunscreen when I was going to the pool. Sometimes I did, but most of the time, I forgot to use it, until one summer when I spent the whole day playing in the pool. At night, my face was red like a shrimp, and I had blisters on my cheeks. That day I learned the importance of using sunblock.

Not all the experiences are good. When I was nine and my sister six, my mother had a very complicated open heart surgery. As my mom had no family to take care of us, we had to spend time with my parents' friends: one week with one family and the next with another. It was very hard for me because I had to be strong for my sister who

was shy and very picky about food. I had to be her model and face all the odds of being with families of different customs and try to make the changes smoother for her. At that time, the situation was difficult, but now I see that thanks to that experience, I was able to mature and become more responsible for my family.

The best examples that the best things in life are free are the feelings and memories that we collect during our life. One of the most funny and lovely memories I have is when I was a kid and used to play with my father and sister. We loved to invent games and toys with boxes and the cushions of the sofa. For example, my sister and I used to sit on a rug. My father held his belt on one end and us on the other. He pulled us around the living room and for us it was a fantastic train that ran all over the world.

An amazing memory that I have when I was very little is when my father used to bring me my bottle of milk to wake me up in the morning. I remember first the sound of the milk in the bottle that my father was shaking while he came to my bed, and then the kiss he always gave me on the forehead. While I grew up, the bottle of milk disappeared, but my father kept waking me up every morning with a kiss on the forehead until I left home. The feelings of the first love, the pain of the breakups and the happiness of finding my soul mate are also things that definitely can't be bought with money.

All the people that I met and touched my life in any way making me more human, the experiences that I had along my life which have given me the opportunity to grow and mature, and the feelings and memories that remain in my mind and in my heart giving me strength and hope to live my life are priceless. That's the reason why I can say without any doubt that "I'm rich".

Michaela Rossi

Crows on Annandale Campus

Acrylic

Vincent Merkel

Coming of Age

I remember who I was in fleeting waves of clarity.

Fit with interest and strength to boot.

I could walk for miles and climb while running.

The burn made me strong.

My mind was so clear but frequently wrong.

I worked out my problems and pain with labor and song.

I remember steady hands and body taking the heat and the cold.

It's much harder now. Perhaps this is the beginning of a man getting old.

It's never too late to get back to mind, body and spirit.

My love has not changed, my passions enflamed.

My soul should be stronger.

I'm too young to feel that I'm old any longer.

Clemon Yueh

The Knight's Career Path

Ride a day out into the wilds to find a cave. Battle through the dungeon within, and then slay a dragon at the bottom. Rescue the poor girl kidnapped by the dragon. Go home and live happily ever after.

It was a simple plan, based on the template of every previous dragon-slayer, so why had it gone so awry?

The knight took off his helmet to rub the back of his neck, where sweat had accumulated. He could easily deal with the various monsters that had lived higher up in the stone-paved dungeon, from the dire rats, to the man-eating plant, and even the giant spider four times his size. He even navigated the labyrinth's narrow corridors with ease.

After pushing through a set of ornate double doors, the knight saw not another monster, but instead a young woman, brunette, and probably almost twenty. She, instead of some fire-breathing monstrosity, sat upon a giant pile of gold in the comfortably-dragon-sized room.

"I was certain the damsel I was sent to rescue was blonde..." he let his thoughts slip out.

At first, the woman remained frozen in surprise at his entrance, holding a hairbrush in the middle of her hair. After a moment, she set down the brush and spoke a reply.

"Oh. I'm probably not who you're looking for, Mr. Hero." She sighed. "Ah, but maybe you should 'rescue' me instead. Vibria is probably going to be really mad when she finds out I was out here. I think she likes meeting heroes first for some reason."

"Vibria." Since the hero didn't know the word, he could only conclude it was the dragon's name, but it didn't explain why there was a human girl right before him and not in a dragon's stomach, or why she would know the dragon's name and temperament.

As he continued staring at the woman in disbelief, footsteps began to echo from the other end of the room, and another woman, tall, buxom, and also not blonde walked into the light of the torch sconces that rimmed the room.

"Marion? Who are you speaking to?"

Marion startled a bit, and turned slowly to face the new speaker. "Ah. Um. Vibria. The newest hero is here."

"What? Are you certain he isn't still burning the webs of the giant spider?" As predicted, Vibria didn't even glance at the knight in her annoyance.

Marion shrugged somewhat apathetically. "I don't think so. I guess we'll have to scrub that ourselves."

"What about the man-eating plant that wouldn't burn no matter how hot the flame?" Vibria looked like she was getting increasingly agitated.

"I guess he must have cut it in half with his sword."

"Even the giant rats?"

"Yup. The rats too." As Marion spoke, she kept her same impassive expression on her face, but the knight could see a vein bulging out in irritation on the taller woman's forehead. "By the way, you know the hero is waiting right over there to slay you, right?"

Vibria was taken aback. "Gah! Then we must finish this conversation later!"

She turned towards the knight, and there was a great puff of smoke, from which began to rise a great red mass of scales, fangs, and flame.

The dragon, who had replaced the buxom woman, roared her challenge, flame and ash issuing from her maw along with the words. "Why have you come here, Child of Man?"

The 'child of man' considered raising his sword to the dragon, but try as he might, he couldn't forget the inane conversation that had just taken place before him. "I came to slay the dragon, and save a damsel in distress, but are you truly the dragon terrorizing this realm?"

"I am indeed a dragon. Can you not see my fiery breath, my scaly tail, and reptilian wings?"

"Then tell me, Dragon, why is there a human woman alive within your lair, brushing her hair as if she had not a care in the world? All the legends speak of dragons as great beasts that sup on maidens, like the one over there." He pointed at Marion, still sitting on a pile of gold.

"Eat maidens? Child of Man, how large do you suppose I am?"

A strange, if easy question. The knight couldn't help but feel like he was being sucked into the dragon's pace, but he answered: "Perhaps five tons? Maybe a bit lighter, since you must fly."

"A close enough guess. Now, how much do you suppose Marion weighs?"

The hero balked. He had been taught all his life that the one thing a Gentleman must never do was ask or guess at a woman's age or weight. Then again, he had just guessed the dragon's weight, and the dragon was female; and despite this Marion continued impassively caring for her hair.

"Perhaps somewhere around 100 pounds? Give or take a dozen?" He hazarded a vague guess. Thankfully, Marion ignored him.

"So assuming I weigh four tons, and Marion weighs 115 pounds, how many maidens do you suppose I would have to eat in a day to sustain myself?"

The hero felt like perhaps the dragon had fudged a few numbers in her math but he let the dragon continue. "Has it not occurred to you humans that I might be doing something with the maidens other than eating them?"

Curiosity began to rise up in the knight's mind, but he raised his sword. He came here for a reason. "Regardless, I have come to return these...maidens to their home in the kingdom! Stand aside or be slain, dragon!"

The dragon sighed deeply again. To the side, Marion put her brush down, produced a book, and began reading.

"Child of Man, you are a knight of the nearby kingdom, are you not?"

"Indeed I am!"

"Which means you come from a feudal society. Have you observed the status of the women about you in the kingdom? They live a dreary life often existing to be little more than tools for marriage, or worse. What sort of life are you bringing these maidens back to?"

"Uh...well. As opposed to what? What alternative have you offered these women?"

"Business." Both knight and dragon looked over to where Marion had replied in the dragon's stead. "Many rare materials grow in the dungeon, but the demand for them is far greater than the occasional adventuring hero wandering in to supply. Man-eating plant sap is in great demand for medicine two kingdoms over."

The knight didn't know how to react to this. Still speaking, the dragon clambered on top of her hoard of gold, and lay down.

"You seem confused, but it's quite logical. This hoard of gold items is so large that I can lie upon it. This much wealth doesn't appear by itself."

"Well, any dragon I've ever heard of raids kingdoms and steals their wealth for himself." The knight argued, but he could already suspect how this would end. It was useless to avoid it—this adventure was already doomed to end in the dragon's victory.

"And how many castles would I have to raid to gather more than my own weight in gold? And how many knights would come after me if I did so? I can simply 'kidnap' a princess or two and teach her some economics, then the wealth gathers itself."

"Bonus because the occasional hero comes and harvests the monsters who live in the lair for us."

It was the hero's turn to sigh. "Dragons really are schemers, huh? But have you considered what to do when the hero actually gets through your lair? I don't want to go back empty-handed."

"Ah yes, even the mightiest hero needs money to eat. If you were to return to the kingdom empty-handed, you would surely be questioned, and an army would come in your place. No, instead I offer you employment, Child of Man."

"Employment?" A heroic knight in the employ of a dragon? "What would you even hire me to do? I am a knight, I am only skilled at fighting, not trading."

"Well, think. I have damsels running caravans all over the land, but being damsels, they have no skill in fighting off bandits and the like. If I hired you to help protect them, you could continuously 'save' damsels all day with better job benefits than your current occupation."

"Job benefits?"

Marion shut her book. "Steady income. Being surrounded by beautiful ex-princesses. Cheap medical care. Minimal chances of being eaten by a dragon."

The knight thought for a second. He couldn't think of any ways this didn't benefit him. And the more he thought about it, the less he wanted to fight the dragon.

"I suppose this day can't get any stranger. I'll take your offer."

The dragon chuckled and gestured to the side of her lair. "Excellent. You can take off that armor in the next room over that way. You can start tomorrow morning when we ship the man-eating plant juice west."

Andrea Michelle Quintanilla Montano

Tigers

Photography

Samuel P. McCrea

Nursing Home Blues

CHARACTERS:

ZACH MILLER, 40-60 years old
MOM (ZACH'S Mother), 80 years old
NURSE, 25-50 years old

TIME: Current date
SETTING: 1940 typewriter, a table the typewriter sits on, a dining-sized table, 2 chairs

#

ONE

(NIGHT. A normally lit room in a nursing home. A 1940 typewriter is on top of a table at center stage right. At center stage, on top of another table – dining sized - are a pack of cigarettes, a lighter, and false teeth. MOM is seated in a chair at the typewriting table and is typing a letter using just her index fingers. ZACH enters SL, greets MOM and sits in the chair at the dining sized table)

ZACH
Hi Mom.

MOM
Huh? Oh, it's you. I was just writing a letter to my Congressman about this extraordinary rendition place they call a nursing home. Where have you been? Why haven't you been visiting me?

ZACH
Mom, I was just here 2 days ago.

MOM
Where were you 1 day ago?

ZACH
I had to work.

MOM
You mean they haven't fired you yet?

(ZACH rises from his chair and helps his mother out of her chair, moves her chair to the dining-sized table, and helps her sit down. Then he sits down in his chair.)

ZACH
How are you today, Mom?

MOM
Old!

ZACH
Can I get you anything?

MOM
A new set of arms and legs and a son who visits his Mother on a regular basis!

ZACH
Mom, I can't see you every day.

MOM
You could if I lived at your place instead of this dump.

ZACH
Mom, you know I have to work and there'd be no one to look after you in the daytime if you lived at my place.

MOM
You just don't want me around so that you can have those wild poker games and drink beer all the time!

ZACH
But, Mom, I don't even know how to play poker. And I don't drink.

MOM
What a sissy! Why can't you be more like your father and drink, cuss, and smoke?

ZACH
But, Dad died of lung cancer from smoking.

MOM
It was not from smoking.

ZACH
I think it was, Mom.

MOM
Don't contradict me! Your father died from a broken heart because he knew he had a son who would dump his Mother in a nursing home the first chance he got.

ZACH
Mom, this is the best Nursing Home in town. You couldn't ask for a better place.

MOM
Alright, you move in and I'll move into your place. (NURSE enters from SL with a tray of food and places it on the table.)

NURSE
Here's your supper, Ms. Miller. How are we doing this evening?

MOM
All of us are doing fine except for having a heartless son who abandoned us in this Nursing Home.

NURSE
Now Ms. Miller, I know your son cares a great deal about you.

MOM
Only because he wants all my money when I die.

NURSE
Why, Mr. Miller was asking me just a few minutes ago how your health is.

MOM
Only because he wants to know how much longer he'll have to wait to start spending my money.

NURSE
Why don't you try some of this delicious food?

MOM
What, is that fried horse?

NURSE
That's roast beef.

MOM
I have a beef with this roast.

NURSE
Well, at least eat some of your vegetables.

MOM
You mean that boiled lump of grass?

NURSE
Those are Brussels sprouts.

MOM
I want some American food. I want French fries.

NURSE
Now, you know fried foods are not good for you.

MOM
Will they make me die quicker?

NURSE
Well, yes.

MOM
Bring me a trayful.

NURSE
Oops, I forgot your water. I'll be right back.

(NURSE exits SL.)

MOM
Quick, son, dump this food in the toilet before the nurse comes back.

ZACH
Mom, you have to eat something to keep up your strength.

MOM
Why?

ZACH
Because you'll die if you don't eat.

MOM
Really? Quick, son, dump this food in the toilet.

ZACH
But, you don't want to die, do you?

MOM
Will you take me out of this nursing home?

ZACH
Mom, I can't.

MOM
Oh Death, where is thy sting?

ZACH
Cut it out, Mom, you make me feel guilty.

MOM
I feel like a smoke. Grab my cigarettes and let's go outside.

ZACH
Don't you think you should give up smoking?

MOM
No. I have to consume cigarettes to keep the economy healthy.

ZACH
But, smoking will kill you.

MOM
Are you sure?

ZACH
Yes.

MOM
Good. Grab my cigarettes and help me outside.

(Zach gets the cigarettes and lighter and assists his Mother in getting up from her chair. They exit SL.)

#

TWO

(NIGHT. Outside the Nursing Home.
The stage is bare and dimly lit.
ZACH and MOM enter from SL.

ZACH
I don't know why you wanted to come out here and smoke. It's very cold out here.

MOM
Shut up and give me a cigarette! I don't know why you picked a nursing home that doesn't allow smoking inside anyway!

ZACH
Mom, this is the 21st century. No nursing homes allow smoking inside anymore.

MOM
My mother smoked every day of her life and the last 10 years of her life in a nursing home!

ZACH
Mom that was 40 years ago!

MOM
Durn, I forgot my false teeth. Run back to my room and get them, will you son?

ZACH
Mom, that's embarrassing, can't you smoke without them?

MOM
No! I'm cutting you out of my will as we speak!

ZACH
Alright, alright.

(ZACH hustles off SL to get his Mother's dentures. He quickly re-enters from SL and hands the teeth to MOM. MOM turns US and simulates popping the teeth in. She turns back DS and clicks her teeth audibly a couple of times. False teeth must be kept hidden in her hand or put into the pocket of her sweater, etc.)

MOM
Alright, son, give me a cigarette.

ZACH
Mom, it's too cold out here. You're going to get sick. Let's go back inside. (NURSE enters from SL and approaches them.)

NURSE
Mr. Miller, don't you think it's too cold for your Mother to be outside?

MOM
You tell him, Toots! He made me come out here hoping this cold would finish me off and he'd have my money all to himself.

ZACH
Mom!

MOM
Alright, alright. He didn't really make me come out here, Hon. I had to have a cigarette before I tried to eat that food you brought me.

NURSE
Well, if you'll only smoke one, I guess it will be alright as long as you assure me that you will eat something.

MOM
I will, Hon. (The NURSE exits SL.)

MOM
Give me a cigarette.

ZACH
Okay, but I can't touch them because they made me wash my hands with some sort of germ-killing solution when I came in so I wouldn't transmit any viruses to any of the residents.

MOM
You are a virus!

(ZACH holds the pack of cigarettes up and tries to shake the pack so that only one cigarette will extend out beyond the others, but after several shakes several cigarettes are extended out beyond the others. Since ZACH's Mother has arthritis in her hands she has difficulty pulling a cigarette from the pack, so she leans forward to take a cigarette out of the pack with her mouth and leans back with all the extended cigarettes in her mouth.)

MOM
Give me a light.

ZACH
You're going to smoke all of them!

MOM
Put the rest back in the pack, ZACH!

ZACH
But, that solution I was telling you about….

MOM
I'm not going to throw perfectly good cigarettes away. They're too expensive. That solution will give them an extra kick.

(ZACH puts all but one of the cigarettes back in the pack and flicks the lighter to light his MOM's cigarette, but the wind keeps blowing the flame out.)

ZACH
MOM, it's just not going to work, it's too windy out here. (Zach's MOM kicks him in the shin.)

ZACH
Ow!

MOM
Give me a light!

ZACH
Alright, alright! Chill out.

MOM
I'm already chilled thanks to you picking a nursing home that makes me go out in a howling blizzard to smoke! (Zach keeps flicking the lighter and finally gets the cigarette lit.)

MOM
Aah! That's good for the lungs. Nothing like the smooth taste of tobacco.

ZACH
Don't you think you ought to cut back some on your smoking?

MOM
Why? To have 10 more years of life in misery, when I could live it up for 7 and die happy?

ZACH
Suit yourself.

MOM
Maybe you're not such a bad son after all. I'll leave you my cigarette lighters, my 1940 typewriter, and table when I'm gone.

(Fade to black.)

Calliope 2015 Contributors

Ahmad Abumraighi is an international student from Jordan. He has majored in Architecture for the passion he has for building and designing. Most of his works include art and history from the Arab world. He enjoys mixing Arabic calligraphy in his drawings. His dream is to bring back the old Muslim architecture and expose it to the modern world of design.

Vanessa Lindquist Barrie shared an edited and embellished story that she used to receive a Chula Vista Adult Education at age 19. A vivid theme in her life is one should never base a person by their appearance. A heart attack took her stepfather suddenly in 2010 at age 54. Her work in *Calliope* is dedicated to her stepfather.

Rosemarie Camara is a Business Student, HR Manager, and a mother. "Little Miss Know-It-All," her first published worked in English, is a look back to her childhood and the fun her dad made her enjoy. Rose is the proud mother of Isabelle, whom she dedicates her work and life to.

Mame Ndoumbe Alimatou Casse is from Senegal. She came in 2013 to get a better education. She is majoring in political science and takes her studies very seriously. Since she was young, she has developed a passion for art though she has never received any formal training. Art has become a therapy for her as it helps her feel more open-minded, overcome bad days, and better understand the world. Besides drawing for amusement, she enjoys exploring different styles. Her drawings also cover the themes of war, disease, and poverty.

Dolores Erendira Cevallos Perez is an ESL student from Ecuador. Her goal is to improve her English so she can incorporate it in the working field. This is her first time at NOVA. Dolores believes that the key of any personal or professional success is family, and that's what reflects in her writing.

Brian Tuan Dang is taking ceramics and sculpture to earn the art education licensure certificate at George Mason in order to one day inspire children to have an appreciation for the arts. He completed a BFA in visual art from George Mason and a MFA in visual art from New York Academy of Art. He has a passion for the creative arts and has advocated for the use of art displayed in church settings and art as a means to fund for justice purposes. He finds his most influential inspiration through God's creation and his personal experiences. There is a saying "If culture is an ecosystem that feeds our souls, what happens to our souls if that ecosystem is polluted?" Dang hopes his art helps foster the renewal of our cultural ecosystem.

Christian V. Doud returned to college after twenty years to pursue a degree and start anew. His poem, inspired by his time living in the West Indies, is a gift to his parents. He will transfer to Old Dominion University in the fall to finish a degree in Finance.

Calliope 2015 Contributors

Jinbum K. Dupont was born in Hawaii, but has lived in Taiwan for most of his life. A pre-med student, Jinbum often writes and partakes in art to balance the black-and-white-ness of his science life with some color. He often draws inspiration for his pieces, such as "Transit Man," from past experiences and societal problems.

Muzhda Sabira Ghafoori is an Afghan-American student from Oakton, Virginia. As a child she read the dictionary for fun and has been in love with the English language ever since. Muzhda majors in Social Sciences at NOVA and hopes to transfer to a university upon graduation. Although in 2009 she won the First Prize Award in the Tinner Hill Dear Editor Contest, this is her first publication for poetry and her first submission to *Calliope*.

Hannah Glaser is a physics major who knows very well the joys of riding a motorcycle to work in the rain. The stupidest bet she ever made resulted in her chugging a bottle of water in her math class in 8th grade. The experiences are similar.

Danah Kim is a Fine Arts major at NOVA. Upon graduation from NOVA, she intends to attend Parsons The New School for Design in fall 2015 to major in Fashion Design.

Sydney Kim has had her first publication in the matrix, and runs a poetry blog on Tumblr for you because she's seen the white fury unraveling in your iron fists. She wants you to know Angels have fought to stand bedside you.

Samuel P. McCrea is in his 2nd year as a student at NOVA. He is retired from the federal government. He loves writing and has written several unpublished short stories and even a couple of poems. He also loves acting and has appeared in several community theater plays.

Vincent Merkel has taught Color theory and Design and the Fundamentals of Sculpture from his studio and for Ziridis private schools in Athens, Greece. Vincent enjoys writing song lyrics, poetry and short stories. He is currently working on an adventure novel and hopes to have it published in 2015.

Luis Antonio Navas-Reyes is an American-Latino. He is a Fine Arts student at NOVA, and plans to attend VCU. He finds inspiration in life, culture, and historical movements. He has a strong work ethic and determination. He is excited for what the future holds.

Stephanie Thu Nguyen is a second-year student studying Teacher Education, and she hopes to continue her studies at James Madison University. She is constantly inspired from personal life experiences and enjoys learning and working with different art mediums, from graphics arts and painting to writing.

Calliope 2015 Contributors

Addison O'Donoguhe is a first-year student and a member of Phi Theta Kappa at NOVA. She plans to transfer to James Madison University after completing her Associate's degree in Biology. She is very excited to share her work with her fellow students and hopes to inspire whoever reads it.

Ali Orakzai is a young, emerging, multi-talented artist who has proven himself in a variety of mediums. Ali believes that he was born to be an artist. Since the time he has known himself, he had always wanted to be surrounded by art and media. He considers his father as his mentor, who has guided him, always encouraged and supported the work he wanted to do. Ali has shown his creativity through the making of animated short films that aim to deliver strong messages.

McLean Pearson is a Neuroscience major. Besides the sciences, he has passions for writing and piano, which he considers great outlets and pastimes. In his first submission for Calliope, he combines both of his talents into the creative nonfiction piece, "The Pianist and His Love."

Andrea Michelle Quintanilla Montano came from El Salvador a year ago looking for something different. She is passionate about art. Currently a first-year Fine Arts major at NOVA, Quintanilla appreciates painting, drawing, and photography. One of her biggest dreams is to become a famous and talented fashion designer. She's looking forward to learning more about art and sharing her art knowledge.

Susan Reichbart is a retired association director of conventions who earned an AA from NOVA and a BS in Business from George Mason University many years ago and returned to the classroom to pursue her interest in painting.

Casey Robbins was born and raised in Idaho and is an Army veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is a 2nd year Business Administration student. Writing is more than just a hobby for him; it's a passion through which he hopes to reach others.

Jeannine C. Rossi is a high school senior taking calculus at NOVA for dual enrollment. In 2014, her poem "Dancing" was published in *Calliope*. She likes playing the piano, oboe, ping-pong, and editing her novel. She plans to go into accounting.

Michaela Rossi was published in Calliope with her poems "Advent Colors" in the 2014 edition and "Before the Tournament" in 2013, which won an Honorable Mention. As a child, Michaela had her colored pencil drawing published in *Spider Magazine*, January 2006. She will graduate in Engineering this spring, and crochets socks.

Calliope 2015 Contributors

Alexandra Nava Ruiz Tecco has returned to school after a 10-year budget analyst/admin career. The impulsive decision to submit to *Calliope* helped her make up her mind to major in English; she's always been most happy when writing, as art and creativity are central to her life. Her flash fiction has been published on Six Sentences.

Souran Sateri is a Business Administration student, who will transfer to George Mason University in 2017. This is her first time sharing any of her pieces and is delighted to know that people may read and gain inspiration from her work. She is excited about the opportunity to share her writing in *Calliope*.
Caitlyn "Cat" Savage has been a NOVA student for three semesters. She has been writing since high school. This is her first published work.

Jason Walter (Jei-Sun) is a 2nd year student. He has made art his profession since discovering his love for East Asian culture. He has lived in Colorado and Virginia and has received many awards and a scholarship to Bemis School of Arts in 2008, and Best Digital Portrait in the Fairfax city Art show in 2013. He is passionate about expressing his true emotion through his art.

Clemon Yueh is a non-traditional Cybersecurity student at NOVA, although he previously studied and acquired a B.A. in Creative Writing at the University of Mary Washington. He has only been previously published once in a collection of poems in the 5th grade.